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VENICE IN THE EIGHTEENTH  
CENTURY









*After Titian*

*Portrait of a Page  
by Tiepolo*

*London: Printed by W. B. Nichols, 1825.*

# VENICE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

FROM THE FRENCH OF  
PHILIPPE MONNIER

*A ghost upon the sands of the sea, so weak—so  
quiet—so bereft of all but her loveliness.—RUSKIN*

PUBLISHED BY RICHARD G. BADGER  
THE GORHAM PRESS, BOSTON  
MCMX

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# VENICE

## IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTORY

A JEST from Scaramouche or Harlequin, an old book bound in leather, the noise of a gilded coach rumbling along the street, the beautifully written score of some grave oratorio, the air of a song delicate as a bird's, a sham sun-dial painted on the wall—dust, luxury, nothing to do, Volta and his frog, Silvia with her smile—there you have Italy in the eighteenth century.

And yet we must not exaggerate, nor forget that with men like Gravina, Vico Muratori, Maffei, and Zeno, all at work, the great revival of criticism inaugurated in the sixteenth century by Sigonio and Vincenzo Borghini, and transferred in the next century to Germany and Holland, was now returning to its native country, there to resume the threads of a broken tradition. Neither should the services of a Vallisnieri or a Spallanzani be overlooked, nor that last outbreak of energy which Milan was to witness just before the end. Still less can we afford to be ungrateful.

For far away in the little home at Frankfort, the mother of Goethe was sitting down at the harpsichord to sing with her Italian music-master *Solitario bosco Ombroso*, or some other of Rolli's dainty ballads. Very sweetly did she sing, and through the soft melody, which her child learnt even before he could understand, there breathed a strange



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charm, lulling his little soul to sleep even as it had lulled and delighted the soul of a whole age. For this was a song of tenderness, the tenderness of Italy, an ancient land and outworn, but still harmless and graceful.

Italy at this period was a curious agglomeration of separate States, scattered here and there like so many crumbs. Its population was composed of a medley of scholars and cavaliers, adventurers and artists, engravers and ballet-dancers, studious men of science and effeminate ecclesiastics. The economist of the day was the Abbé Galiani, a lanky, humorous fellow, on whose tomb were carved a Silenus, a bust of Plato, and figures of Punchinello and one of the Graces. For poet we have Metastasio; and for Pope, Lambertini, a man of little ceremony, who once entertained *Président de Brosses* at Bologna with tales of gallantry. The whole country was over-ridden by the troops of France and the Empire, who found it a convenient battleground, and carried on a courtly warfare in which the officers' quarters opened on to the fortifications, and finely decked ladies flitted about the camp. Hither, too, came all the antiquaries of Europe, eager to carry off its treasures, pictures, statues, and gems. Already Italy had become the playground of the world. Even the little dry gunpowder that remained was used, so it was said, not for guns as in Prussia, nor for mortars as in France, but just to be made into squibs. Those among the nobility who were inclined to the patronage of the arts, amused themselves at the theatre, or with "a little science." Scholars and dignitaries of the Church exchanged sonnets and boxes of chocolate. *Perfetti* was alleged to invoke the aid of Heaven before sitting down to compose. Having said Mass, *Lorenzi* improvised his sermon in verse. *Frugoni* recited an impromptu poem to a lady on the subject of a bottle of *maraschino*. Literature had become an accomplishment of society, poetry an art whose end was merely to "please by imitation." Every one talked French, and played at Shepherd and

Shepherdess. The old nobility of soul was gone. Enjoyment was the only aim in life, and learning and pleasure were pursued as a means to self-forgetfulness. Thus it was a period of brilliance and gaiety. Crowned with olive branches, the days passed in dream or dissipation. It was the Italy of the past—the old régime.

Yet though, politically speaking, Italy had almost ceased to exist, she revenged herself on her conquerors by throwing in their face a challenge of laughter and song. Even as twice before she had shown herself the moving spirit in an intellectual revolution, so now, in spite of three centuries of isolation, she came forth again illustrious as the Queen of pleasure, leader of the joy of the world. "Let others," she seemed to say, "busy themselves with their theories, I will build theatres. Let others carry on a propaganda of ideas, I will be a missionary of melodies. Let others supply philosophy, I will supply laughter." So in the masks of her comedy, in the airs of her opera, in the swarms of her singers, dancers, actors, and musicians, we see all the poetry, the grace, and the gaiety of this expiring Kingdom, for whom amusement was a dogma, Vestris almost a divinity.

Italy, then, in an age of reason and prose, alone remained faithful to the poetry of things. In spite of a splendid record of artistic achievement and a long roll of famous sons, there was as yet no failure in the impulse to create. It seemed, indeed, as though the time was already ripe for a fresh outburst of energy, a new spring time. And in the forefront of this time-spent country, so learned, so frivolous, so musical, so captivating, so gay, one city stands out unique, supremely individual.

Naples was under the Bourbons ; Milan was subject to Austria ; in Tuscany the house of Lorraine held sway. Venice alone remained free—with no viceroy to keep her in leading-strings, no governor to give orders, no grand duke to grant this or refuse that. The ancient Republic that had never known the position of vassal, that had

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never been definitely either Guelph or Ghibelline, that had never professed allegiance to the Empire, kept her freedom to the end. True to herself, she was still the mistress of her destiny, and at her head the Doge still sat supreme.

All the old customs were religiously maintained. Standing at the summit of the Giant's Staircase the youngest member of the Council crowned the new Doge with the ducal cap: *Accipe coronam ducatem ducatus Venetiarum*, so ran the words of institution. And then, embarking on the good ship *Bucentor*, the Doge would cast the bridal ring of the Republic into the sea. *Desponsamus te, mare, in signum veri perpetuique dominii*. Whenever he appeared in public, the Doge was preceded by a procession of grooms, ensigns, trumpeters, bearers of the ducal chair, the sceptre, the sword, and the cushion. His official robes were the dalmatic, all of gold and silver, the cloak of golden brocade trimmed with ermine, and the hat of fine cambric which he never took off, not even in church. And then there was the *corno*, the horn of plenty, sometimes of gems and cloth of gold, sometimes of crimson silk bordered with gold. The royal galley lay at anchor in the harbour, and still, from his appointed place, high up on the dome of St. Mark, the state crier proclaimed the laws of the most serene Republic.

The *Commandadore* still raised aloft the blue mantle and the emblazoned cap, and secret impeachments continued to be dropped stealthily into the Lion's Mouth, their traditional receptacle. And still, beneath the ceiling of Veronese, the three Inquisitors would sit in consultation, the Red Inquisitor in the middle, his two black brethren on either side. Nothing was changed. Laws, ceremonies, manners, customs, elaborated during thirteen centuries of independence, remained intact. No outside influence had come as yet to modify the original mode of life, no revolution to change the natural character of the place. The healthy awe that Venice had always inspired in the outside world was as powerful as ever. She re-

maintained the city of wonderful legend, at once terrible and bewitching. The city of fearful and subtle poisons, of guile and mystery, where even walls had ears, and where every keyhole was an eye. Spies were everywhere, disguised in the cassock of an abbé, or the frock of a dancer ; at night the very shadows were dangerous ; and there were stories of strange sacks thrown into the canal ; of the gondola of the Supreme Tribunal heralded by a red flame, or of the body of a priest found at the bottom of a well, with its skin all gone green. Such stories are typical of a city that maintained a very old form of Italian civilisation right up to the time of the Revolution.

And yet, alas ! Venice was no longer what she had been, in those great days of the past, when she had stood ready to meet every attack whether from the land or from the sea, when she had built mansions worthy of herself with marble brought by ship from Istria and the Carnian Alps, when, as one man, she had assembled her forces at the Strait of Malamocco with St. Mark himself as her general. Truly, those were brave days. Then she had bidden defiance to the Emperor, to the Kings of Hungary, to the Turks, the Greeks, the Genoese ; she had measured her strength with barbarians and freebooters, Normans and privateers, Cossacks and Janissaries, with Europe itself united to crush her in the league of Cambrai. Either shore of the Gulf of Venice had acknowledged her as its mistress ; Cyprus and the Morea, Candia and the Cyclades had bowed before her, and the standard of the Republic—the lion of St. Mark—had floated above the walls of Athens and Byzantium. The East was studded with her forts, consulates, and offices ; the highways of the world shook to the rumble of her caravans. None but Venetian money was current among Mongols, Persians, Arabs, or Hindus. Her explorers had been the first to penetrate to the plateau of the Pamirs and the desert of Gobi. Every year three thousand ships put out to sea from her port ; thirty thousand sailors embarked on her galleys. Her trade in



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cloth of gold alone brought in two million sequins from Italy, and ten millions from other countries. Through her mediation Trebizond and Moscow, London and Alexandria were brought into contact, while she made treaties with the Paleologi, the Czar, the Pope, the Caliph, the Sultan, and the great Khan, just as she had made them with Frederick Barbarossa himself. To perform such wonders a harvest of men had arisen almost miraculously ; simple merchants, transformed into the conquerors of an archipelago, their faces stained with powder, and tanned by exposure to the elements. At their own expense men like Dandolo, Querini, Foscari, Venier, and Sanudo fitted out fleets that were destined to capture whole islands. The Navagieri became Dukes of Lemnos, the Sanudo Princes of Naxos and Paros—simple merchants, yet needing a palace to live in, and a mausoleum in which to be buried. Alvise Mocenigo died in the Senate-house in the middle of a prayer. Lazare Mocenigo, on the bridge of his ship, standard in hand, fell crushed by the mainmast that had been shattered by a cannon ball ; while Marc-Antonio Bragadin, the hero of Famagusta, calmly recited a *miserere* as he was being flayed alive by the Turks. Fastened to the yard-arm, and wrapped in a scarlet flag, his skin was brought home again, as one of the spoils of victory. Carlo Zeno received forty wounds in the service of the Republic. Vettore Pisani was brought forth from the dungeon into which he had been cast, and ordered to go and conquer the Genoese fleet at Chioggia. As a reward for his exploits Francesco Morosini received the title of “ the Peloponnesian.” We can almost see in imagination these old dignitaries, dressed up like so many women but with the hearts of heroes. Peaceable, silent, energetic, wise, they seem like the great men we read of in Plutarch, or like the marble statues in some cold cathedral. When they sat together in the Council they must have appeared not so much a meeting of citizens as an assembly of kings. Truly those were brave days.



To the sound of singing, the piles had been sunk in the lagoon, anchors had been weighed, ships had struck out for the open sea—out into the future. And from time to time the watchman, perched on the summit of the Campanile, trimmed like a ship's mast, would give his signal, and the bells of S. Niccolo on the Lido would ring out, while on the horizon the triumphant galleys of the Republic came into view. They were loaded with treasure, crimson and gold, ebony, lacquer work, indigo, ostrich feathers, pearls from Ormuz, cloth from Damascus, bric-a-brac from Armenia. And in the rear perhaps came trailing captured ships of war, their sails all furled. Later, on the jetty, they would unload the conquered standards of the enemy, and with them the trophies of war—the columns of St. John of Acre, a four-horse chariot from Byzantium, or it may be lions from the Piræus. Thus the city was beautified, and the magnificent victories of the Republic perpetuated themselves in magnificent legends, splendid fêtes, and beautiful frescoes. Beauty, indeed, became as necessary to the mental life of the nation as air was necessary to its lungs. The cultivation of music was one of the functions of government. Men like Bembo and Andrea Navagero rivalled each other in elegant platonic dialogues, sitting under the shade of a bay tree. A Titian, a Tintoret, a Veronese, painted from a palette of liquid amber or melted pearl. Ermolao Barbaro gave readings from Aristotle to the gilded youth assembled in the quiet of his palace. Lauro Quirini delivered lectures in the open street. Aldus Manutius scattered broadcast over Europe the thought of three worlds. And through it all, something of the democrat thrilled in every breast. For then it was that the public spirit, handed down from one brave soul to another, glorified itself in noble deeds, found vent in splendid hymns. And then it was that a successful life consisted in obeying the law of honour, serving the State, defending the State, being an ornament to the State, and, in the intervals of war or embassy, writing the history of its

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noble past. Such had been the greatness of Venice. Her glory had been world-wide, her empire had extended over the seas.

But now times are changed. Old age has come, death is at hand. The most serene Republic is approaching the completion of her history. She is threatened with dissolution, and prepares herself for the end. Yet this death-bed has about it nothing sordid, nothing grotesque. It comes in a moment of exquisite grace, and she breathes her last breath to the sound of music. Never, indeed, could life have seemed to Venice more lovely than at the instant of its loss. Like the sun setting in the sea, she threw around all that she was leaving an unforgettable glimmer of farewell.

Thus, even in her decadence, Venice remained great. For her greatness had been built up on the rock of her past, and this past was potent still. Blemishes there might be in her glory, but the glory was there. Though the moths were beginning to eat their way into her garments, they still shone with the lustre of old gold. Her decline at least was picturesque, her ruins magnificent.

And Venice, however impoverished, could always boast of a few rich families. The Mocenigo, the Zenobio, and the Contarini kept ten gondolas at their doors, and fifty servants in their livery. Lady Montagu tells of a girl of the Martinengo family who brought her husband a dowry of 10,000 sequins and the promise of an income of £3000 a year, in addition to the finest palace in Brescia—far finer than any palace in London—a country estate, as well as timber, plate, and jewels of immense value. The Pisani, who, according to Montesquieu, had an income of 100,000 florins, built a villa at Strà which was the talk of Europe, and entertained Gustavus of Sweden with festivities which, on his own admission, it would have been impossible to return. On the death of one of their family, who was Doge at the time, the Mocenigo put eighty servants into mourning; on the election of another as

Procurator, they gave a reception which cost them 40,000 ducats; and for a third they opened communications between three of their palaces, so that they could offer for the enjoyment of their guests as many as forty rooms in a single suite.

Filippo Farsetti, when at Rome, purchased forty-two gigantic columns, each carved out of a single block of stone, and there is a story of Caterina Querini at a reception given by the Foscari family which is even more typical. She was dancing with the King of Denmark when, through a thread in her dress giving way, the pearls with which it was studded fell scattered on the floor, while she, smiling and quite unconcerned, finished out the dance. There is something fine, surely, in the thought of this great lady dancing over her own jewels with a smile on her face!

So, even as in the days of those women whom Veronese loved to paint leaning pensively over a balustrade above the Grand Canal, there rose the great palaces of the Venetian nobility. Here was to be seen the silver torch of the Morosini, the silver ladder of the Gradenigo, the rose branch of the Mocenigo, the six five-leaved roses of the house of Lorédan, all carved in arabesques of stone. On palace steps, lapped by the water, flanked by emblazoned piles, strutted the porter up and down in his belt and doublet of gold. Inside, the hall was lit by a ship's lantern. Sometimes, as in the case of the Foscari palace, so many as 200 apartments were to be found opening into one another, all sumptuously furnished, according to the prevailing taste, with columns, mirrors, statues, trophies, and other decorations. As one makes one's way into these gorgeous precincts, planned so nobly and with such regard to detail, one recovers something of the splendid Venice where Albert Dürer first tasted the pleasures of luxuriance.

Luxury was natural to the Venetians. It became them like a habit of brocade with heavy folds. The Republic that boasted of its *Bucentor*—the ship plated

with gold—and of its gondoliers clad in red velvet and gold lace, always remembered that its daughters had been held worthy to be the brides of kings. And everything was done to keep up the appearance of greatness. If the arrival of Pope or Emperor was announced, or the advent of a Grand Duke or a Prince of the blood, preparations were at once put in hand for a welcome which recalls nothing so much as a page out of the “Arabian Nights.” In the winter of 1782, the future Czar Paul, and Maria Teovodovna, his wife, were received with fêtes of unparalleled magnificence. A regatta was held on the Canal, and a bull-fight was organised in the Piazza, which had been converted for the occasion into a temporary arena. But before all this a splendid banquet was served in the theatre of St. Samuel. The stage was decorated from floor to ceiling with mirrors framed in silver ; the auditorium was hung with blue satin shot with silver. Music was provided by four orchestras, and a hundred orphan children from the four Charity Schools raised their fresh young voices in melodious chorus. The attendants numbered 80 chamberlains in blue and gold livery, 12 footmen, 6 stewards, and 132 henchmen. For the visit of the Emperor Joseph II., plans were made for a welcome even more elaborate. The idea was to turn the entire dock of St. Mark into a magician’s lake and garden of enchantment. There were to be wooded islets, music, groves of myrtle and bay, glimpses of idyllic landscape, peopled with nymphs—nymphs everywhere—sporting among the thickets, in the grottos, and in the water. Then, after dinner, the scene was to change, as if under a fairy’s wand, into something still more beautiful : Venice by night, illuminated, dressed with flags.

So, through the withered veins of civic life some live blood still flowed. The sap of health was not entirely dry, and the great race that had lived so long was yet to leave the record of some worthy actions. In the year 1717, for instance, Flangini, mortally wounded, ordered his comrades to carry him on to the poop of his ship, there, like a



second Epaminondas, to witness as he lay dying the defeat of the Turks. In 1762 the Doge Foscari, one of the greatest the Republic had ever known, mounted the Giant's Staircase, and thus addressed the people: "I will show," said he, "I will show to my beloved people the example of a father's love coupled with the far-sightedness of a Prince." In 1782 was brought to its conclusion that romantic work of the Murazzi whereby a barrier against the fury of the sea was set up, with wonderful heroism and an output of energy almost Titanic. In Senate-house, too, or Council, one might still listen to one of those harangues, so simple and harmonious, so eloquent and dignified, which had been known to last as long as eight hours. *Corno* in hand, the Doge, Paolo Renier, was speaking once in a time of public crisis. "To-day," cried he, "To-day let us forget *I* and remember *We*, for in us lies the safety of the Republic." The speaker's eloquence brought the audience to its feet, as his voice echoed in the silence. For the "grand style" was still in vogue. And with the "grand style" in oratory, we find it also in the arts of painting and music—in the solemn, passionless music, in the heroic fugues of Lotti. As for a man like Benedetto Marcello, the loyal servant of the State whence he derived his nobility, and of Heaven whence he derived his talents, he must have seemed to his contemporaries the very Raphael of music. In his psalms, indeed, which are remarkable for their devotional feeling, we catch something of the solemnity of infinite space and the grandeur of perfect holiness.

An artist of the grand style, too, is Giambattista Tiepolo. He was of the school of Veronese, and loved to delight his fancy with wonderful lights and strange architecture, beautiful "draperies," beautiful forms, animals, and implements. He was the last great painter that Venice produced, and with him, though in a different sphere, we may set her last great admiral, Angelo Emo. He it was who purged the Mediterranean of its pirates,

laid siege to Turin, bombarded Sfax, took Bizerta, arrested the Bey, and dreamt of the conquest of Algeria. And he would have conquered it, a century before France, if only his Government had given him the 10,000 men which he demanded.

"If you compare," wrote Marco Foscarini in a letter to his great-nephews, "if you compare our civil with our literary history, you will meet here and there the names of prominent men who at one and the same time helped the city with their wisdom and glorified her with their services to the fine arts." Patricians of the old school they were, who boasted of their Latin scholarship as well as their taste in dress, and were noble alike in their serenity of soul and in the loftiness of their pride. They adorned both art and politics by their presence, and their example was not wasted. Coming out of church one day, Goethe paused to admire and to salute a procession of these men. In their trailing robes, they seemed to him, so he writes, wise without affectation, men who loved peace and were sure of themselves, taking life easily, and all animated by a certain gaiety. As examples we may take Paolo Renier, who was to have his statue carved by Canova, knew Homer by heart, and made a translation of Plato in the Venetian dialect; Francesco Foscari, who at his own expense had printed an edition in thirty-four volumes of the *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Sacrarum*; Francesco Pesaro, who commissioned from Morelli the critical edition of Bembo's *Storia* after the text discovered among the city archives; and Pietro Crimani, who held discussions on Astronomy with Isaac Newton.

As the three most perfect things in the world Algarotti numbered the discipline of the Prussian army, Tartini's violin, and the head of Giovanni Emo. It was an age of versatility, when Latin, the humanities, history, agriculture, and law formed the subjects that occupied the exalted attention of a whole pleiad of calm and serene intellects. There were the celebrated private libraries of the Pesaro,



Pinelli, Nani, Zeno, Farsetti, Contarini, Grimani, and Pisani families, and outside the city the Forsetti had founded a botanical garden which was considered the finest in Europe. The Pisani opened an Academy of Fine Arts in their own palace, and made Pietro Longhi its first director. In 1734 the Sagredo confided to the care of the same artist the decoration of the main staircase of their palace, and in 1743 Tiepolo was commissioned by the Labia family to paint two wonderful frescoes illustrating the life of Cleopatra. In 1759 the Pisani also gave him an order to adorn the ceiling of their villa with a representation of the glorious history of their house.

In his villa at Altichiero, surrounded by books, antiquities, and beautiful gardens, Angelo Querini, the friend of Voltaire, led the life of a philosophic art patron. A bust of Bacon adorned his library; a statue of Venus presided over the dove-cot; in the garden, planted with sweet herbs, rose an altar to Tranquillity; while the summer-house was dedicated to the Goddess of Folly, watched over by a bust of Marcus Aurelius, and decorated with a motto from Montaigne. Wherever one turned one found a strange confusion of arbours, tombs, aviaries, sarcophagi, Etruscan monuments, sphinxes, obelisks, columns, with verses carved here and there on the moss-grown marble.

And yet, in spite of all this cultured luxury and mock rusticity, life at bottom remained frugal enough. "Friends," the master of the dwelling is reported to have said, when sitting down to dinner, "Bonneval used to pretend that it was the soup that had eaten up his knife and fork; in this case it seems to me that the knives and forks have eaten up the soup!"

Marco Foscarini himself affords an excellent example of that class of cultured grandee whose history he was to write. At various times, Ambassador at Rome, Vienna, and Turin, Procurator of St. Mark, and Doge, he was also the official historian of the Republic, reformer of the Studio

of Padua, humanist, man of learning, orator, critic, and Latin scholar. He wore out in his service ten copying clerks, and once imposed on poor old Gozzi the discipline of an all-night sitting. According to Marco Focallini his was a soul eaten up with a passion for fame. On his death-bed, which occurred all too soon, he called for a book entitled *De Modo Bene Moriendi*, and then, after a moment of delirium during which he discussed affairs of State, he expired thinking of his valets. *Povera servitù!* Latin seems the only possible language in which to write the story of a life like this. "Both in his soul and in his style," says his biographer, "*nobilitas generis et morum probitas elucebat.*"

Men of this stamp inevitably found women of a like character whom they could love and associate with on equal terms. Such an one was the Lady Contarina Barbarigo, who at an entertainment, held the Emperor Joseph II. spellbound in his chair for five whole hours. Another was Catarina Dolfin-Tron, a woman of an extraordinary, almost masculine beauty, who combined in herself the culture and the passion of some classic courtesan. A member of the Dolfin family, and the divorced wife of a Tiepolo, she had taken as her second husband Andrea Tron, a man who was endowed with all the attraction of a born ruler, and whom the common people had surnamed "The Patron." She was accustomed to give full rein to her open, man's nature. "I am a good-humoured creature," she wrote to her fiancé; and as she once told the young Serbelloni, for whom, though already nearing middle age, she conceived a last violent attachment, her soul lived on her lips.

That she was no ordinary woman, she herself knew, and never suffered any one to forget. Such treatment, indeed, neither her birth, her manner of life, nor her intellect could allow. But she was a good hater as well as a good lover, and if a man like the unfortunate Gratarol learnt, during his exile, the extent of her power and the forcefulness of

her resentment, the poor poet Gozzi, who called her his daughter and was helped by her truly beautiful friendship, tasted to the full the depth of her generosity. Above all the trivialities of etiquette, she was whole-heartedly at the service of her passions. She modelled herself on Plutarch, read Greek, and claimed that she should be treated as a gentleman by gentlemen. Her extraordinary veneration for her poor father was kept up to the end of her life. "The unconquerable one," she called him, great but unfortunate; and she never forgot that though as a man he could scarcely be called "strait-laced," it was he that had first taught her to hate falsehood, and to love honour and learning. She celebrated his memory in a sonnet sequence, rather stiff and crude, which she published without any preliminary excuses because, as she naïvely remarked, the sonnets "had been written for publication." In these poems she describes the pleasure she feels in looking at herself in the glass and finding there some vestige of her father's look. To be more like him she tires herself out with work. She never leaves the room that was once his, sleeps in his very bed. All that he loved she also loves and reverences—the ground on which he walked, the cold marble that now holds his body—and if she is destined to experience the same bitter fate that came to him, she will not quail; for life is a thing to love, since she has received it from him. And when at last, after experiencing all that life had to offer her of passion or success, now old and widowed, in the bitterness of the end, in loneliness and poverty, she comes to die, it is without flinching. "I, daughter of a Dolfin, wife of a Tron, I will hold fast to God. I will not kill myself. And if I fall, it shall never be upon my knees!" In words like these one recognises the descendant of a race indomitable of will, energetic, virile.

This was a century in which time itself seemed to stand still. There were no surprises, and parallels to its methods of thought and action might easily be found throughout

thirteen centuries of Venetian history. For the past had been too profound, it had sunk too deep into the heart and conscience of the race, ever to break with itself. Betrayed by destiny, the Republic, even in its death agony, never forgot. Placid and haughty, it ran its appointed course, maintained its own tradition, looking neither to right nor left. Not even the bitterness of the end could break a way through this stern continuity. Its very inertia conspired to keep it great. Nay more, on to the old and wrinkled stem a new shoot, as it were, was being engrafted, and there was the promise of a new refinement, a new brilliance, expressing itself everywhere ; in the lines, for instance, of those stiff armchairs of the grand period, which the good artist Brustolon was now beginning to modify with the delicacy of graceful figures, alluring in their slim nudity.

Venice then stands out conspicuously from the rest of Italy, not only because of her unique independence, but because she was the city where life was most vivid, most intense. Never in the whole of her history had she been freer of the influence of Rome than at this moment of supreme civilisation ; never had she seemed more worthy of her cleverness and her beautiful dialect, never more signally, more triumphantly *Venetian*. Her record as the nurse of brilliant intellects had never stood so high, and the grace and happiness and good-fellowship that dwelt deep in her soul were finding utterance in an unexampled harmony. It appeared almost as if this great tree, rooted so firmly in a remote past—in the depths of the sea itself—had, in defiance of nature and man, endured, struggled, triumphed into life for no other purpose than that it might blossom out at last into a supreme and delicious flower of the mind.

In accordance with Lanzi's theory, we find that in the eighteenth century Venice was the birthplace of the only school of Italian painting worthy of the name. It was at Venice that Goldoni laid the foundation of the one truly Italian school of comedy ; and it was in Venice that, in the



plays of Carlo Gozzi, Italy was to see the last of the old comedy, with its conventions and masks, and that under the auspices of Marcello, Buranello, and the four Charity Schools, the new music was to find its cradle and first dare to raise its voice.

Here, too, were the printing presses of Pasquali, Albrizzi, and Zatta, whence issued those splendid editions that maintained for the city of Aldus its supremacy in the world of books. With a fantastic and over-cultivated wit Gasparo Gozzi combined the saving grace of good sense. Galuppi was pouring forth his charming melody in an effortless stream. Rosalba Carriera was fixing for ever on the lid of some little box the smiling face of one or other of her contemporaries. In tiny genre pictures Pietro Longhi was conjuring up the little gallantries and intimacies in the dissipated life of the period. Canaletto, Guardi, and Bernardo Bellotto were busy in displaying every aspect of their landscape of water and marble. Da Ponte was composing the libretti of Mozart's operas. Casanova, impudent as the valet in a play, was pursuing the thread of his amorous intrigues. In men like Apostolo Zeno, the master of Metastasio, the Abbé Conti, friend of Madame de Caylus, and the little Count Algarotti, learning, philosophy, and the Encyclopedia all found ardent disciples, while a whole little Academy of gaiety and fun was inspiring itself with examples of the best literature for the sole pleasure of making game of the bombast and affectation of the devotees of the mock Arcadia.

In this land of newspapers and gazettes, many a thin little sheet sparkled with liveliness and wit, while a band of native poets amused themselves by writing attractive verses endowed with all the caressing grace of the lisping Venetian dialect.

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter ?

Goldoni, the two Gozzi, Rosalba, Guardi, Buranello, Da Ponte, Casanova, the Granelleschi—expressing them-

selves, some in miniatures and music, others in plays or little songs or pictures, or in a life of freedom and adventure—all agree in this, that they indicate a state of mind that is happy.

The purpose of the present book is to study this state of mind.



## CHAPTER II

### THE LIFE OF PLEASURE

“PEOPLE who have not known the life of the ten years preceding the Revolution,” said Talleyrand, “have never tasted the joy of living.” It was at Venice that this joy was felt at its keenest. For in those days Venice was the very heart of Italy, with no cares to disturb or to distract her from the continual round of pleasure in which she was involved, the heritage which she had received from the age of the old régime. In the sphere of intellect the city was free from agitation. She was untroubled by the distracting genius of a Kant, or the seriousness of a Rousseau. Politically she was faced by no pressing problems. Germany was busy with the task of internal reorganisation, England with the foundation of a Colonial Empire, France with the silent threatenings of unrest that were to break out shortly in a reign of terror and revolution. In Venice alone men set before themselves another ideal of life and thought—to be simply and sincerely happy. And in this they certainly succeeded. “The world is a happy place,” said Casanova, one day when he felt well, was fortunate in love, and had plenty of money to spend. “The world is a happy place !” And it is the peculiar glory of the city that at this period it had contrived to gather to itself all the material for happiness, and to expend its last energies in enjoying it remorselessly, unflinchingly. So, if pleasure has ever had its heroes, it is here and now that we must seek for them.

In the eighteenth century Venice was neither more nor less than an enchanted city, a wonderful, mad city of masks and serenades, of amusement and pretence. It

was a place whence one might embark, as it were, for the island of Cytherea in a boat graced with golden tackle and gay with paper lanterns. "The Sybaris of Europe" Foscolo called it; Algarotti, "the free and blessed country of pleasure and beauty"; while Countess Wynne of Rosenberg wrote of its manner of life as the most delightful and appropriate for the man of leisure that could anywhere be found.

A long period of peace had done its work. Venice had already ceased to take her proper share in the struggles and disputes that were being fought out all round her. While neighbouring States were quarrelling and tearing each other to pieces, the city maintained an attitude of armed, or, more correctly, *unarmed* peace. She boasted of her good humour and courtesy in political affairs, but in reality this meant nothing more than a policy of ease and self-indulgence. Foreign ambassadors were welcomed to her palaces on no better pretexts than to fritter away their time, and at the end of her long life the republic seemed to have acquired nothing more valuable than an old man's faculty for suspicion and intrigue. Her history, in any real sense, was over. Yet we should be doing an injustice to the city in asserting that nothing ever happened there. For at the Carnival in 1757 there was on show a wonderful Irish giant who turned the scale at over 400 pounds, and claimed to be the tallest man in all Europe. Otherwise we have no record of any vital occurrence. There was, it is true, a little spasmodic fighting in Corfu, Dalmatia, and Algiers, and a good deal of business of one kind or another was transacted in the Council. Some spirited and successful opposition was excited against the fantastical measures introduced by Angelo Querini and Orvagio Pisani; and Gratarol, the secretary, who became involved in a theatrical scandal which cost him his position, supplied the excitement of a famous *cause célèbre*. There was also the closure of the official gaming-house on the Ridotto. Such incidents, however, can scarcely be

regarded as epoch-making. In the old days an army of crusaders marshalled in the Cathedral of St. Mark, or a victorious fleet returning from Chioggia, had afforded subjects fit for epic treatment on frescoed walls. To-day, painters of frivolous genre pictures could find nothing more inspiring to their brush than the lagoon frozen up to Mestre by an exceptionally severe frost, or, it might be, a fire at the church of S. Navarola. The people, too, had become so hysterical and mean-spirited that at the election of a new Doge they behaved, so said Archenholtz, the Prussian, just as if the Republic were being founded for the first time ; and according to Casotti, the good prior of the Impruneta, the citizens could take no interest in anything but fêtes and merry-making.

The Government was so kind and unexacting that every one was allowed to do just as he pleased, provided only that he left politics and religion severely alone, two weighty matters for which the State was willing to assume the entire responsibility. Ever since 1717 the dreaded Poison of the Inquisitors had been growing stale in its box, the recipe had been lost, and the way to prepare a further supply forgotten. Throughout the entire century scarcely more than seven or eight prisoners had suffered detention in the State prisons, and in lieu of the Bridge of Sighs with its sinister memories we have the Chamber of Sighs on the Ridotto, a place which became proverbial as the haunt of ruined gamesters and unsuccessful suitors. It was a civilisation that retained its grace and urbanity in the midst of decline, like some aged, white-haired patrician, gowned in honourable purple, feeding a dove from his own hand. Carlo Gozzi in his *Memorie Inutili* speaks of the affability and ingratiating sweetness which characterised almost all the Venetian nobles of the period, and he tells a delightful story of his uncle Tiepolo that we may well take as typical. Disembarking one evening from his gondola he stumbled, and might have slid into the water had not his gondolier put out a hand and so prevented the fall.

But in so doing the gondolier was forced to let go the oar which he was holding, so that it fell and struck his master on the right arm, bruising it severely. The man was quite ignorant of what had happened, and Tiepolo went straight up to his room without a word. When his valet came as usual to help him off with his clothes all he said was : "Gently, gently, please. My right arm is in two pieces."

The population of the city was a population of holiday-makers. It comprised poets and parasites, barbers and money-lenders, virtuosos, courtesans, ballet-dancers, actors, croupiers, panders—all those, in fact, who make their living out of pleasure and luxury. Time sped gaily in a round of shows and concerts, and life itself passed by as it were upon a stage set for some fête. The great palaces were deserted as too sombre for the frivolity of the hour, and people began to live out of doors, in public, installing themselves on the Piazza or the Piazzetta. It seemed as though the citizens had taken up their residences under the arcades, in front of the shops, by the side of the Grand Canal, in the cafés and clubs, or on the Broglio, where the nobles were accustomed to lay plans for their intrigues, or on the Ridotto, where they sat concerned, as at a Council.

Night itself was turned into day.

There were seven theatres, two hundred cafés always open, and an infinite number of *casini* which lit up at two o'clock in the morning and were frequented by lords and ladies of the highest nobility mingled with a crowd of nobodies. Carved panels, white mouldings, gilt foliage, silver candlesticks, card tables, fine marble, lace, flowers—such was the framework of this fairy world.

Let us look at Venice one summer's day. Out of a veil of tenderest blue, soft as mist, cradled in a translucent vapour, rises the city of the sea like a dream of rose and marble. Air and water seem to merge themselves with the vision of her past, and to weave for her a robe of fantasy, where opal and mother-of-pearl, coral, old ivory, and old silver are wedded in a riot of pink, palest violet,

and lucent grey. Over everything there is a wonderful brightness. It bathes the domes, the cupolas, the towers of the city in an exquisite luminosity, displaying their spires and pinnacles in a trellised daintiness more like lace than stone. And below, motionless as ships at anchor, the great palaces look out on one another, and gondolas with tapering sides and gaily coloured canopies flash through the green surface of the water, flecked with gold. Pennons stream in the air. Vessels with gilded cutwaters come up alongside the jetty. Yellow masts soar heavenwards ; the rigging trails behind. And from the holds of the merchantmen, and from the rows of casks along the quay, rises an odour of far-away things, of things scorched by the sun, of musk and peppermint. In front of the cafés hundreds of people are seated ; they are eating ices, and the air throbs with the clatter of their talk and the jingle of their spoons. Under the arcades a great throng goes and comes. Here a cloak of silk, grey, blue, red, or black ; there a green doublet from Hungary, trimmed with gold and vair, or a gown of crimson embroidered with flowers ; stoles of gold, wigs fit for a comedy, muffs of panther skin, paper fans, turbans, plumes, and the little three-cornered hats of the ladies perched at a jaunty angle. It is the population of an Oriental market, of a sea-port, of a fairy opera all in one. Every language under the sun can be heard in the streets, and Beckford, the English traveller, tells us that, but for the presence of the Campanile, he could well have thought himself at the Tower of Babel.<sup>1</sup>

Hither and thither sways the crowd. The people jostle one another, hail one another, laughing all the time, for they are as happy as the little ripples out on the lagoon yonder. Here is a negro servant in red livery, bearing a letter sealed with Spanish wax. There an idler, dressed in a doublet of green, or perhaps a bare-headed senator with trailing sleeves, his handkerchief, snuff-box, and documents all carried safe in his cap. That pretty girl with the water-pot has stuck a carnation in her ear out of



sheer whim ; and of smart dresses there is simply no end. The canals are crowded with boats, some filled with pleasure parties, others loaded with vegetables, flowers, old clothes, or it may be with coffins. And over all broods a faint perfume of the Orient. On the flag-stones yonder a few red-hatted gondoliers sit huddled up over a game of cards. A little group of urchins, quite naked, their skin dark as bronze, are busy devouring a water-melon. On a step of the traghetto a woman scolds her child. Day in day out the great game of life goes on. Over the smooth water the sun himself is playing at ducks and drakes, as it were, with his flakes of diamond light.

And we must not omit the blind old musicians, snuffing out their broken melodies, nor yet the quack doctors, each crying aloud the merits of his own particular nostrum, nor the wandering showmen with their marionettes, nor the open-air preacher with his crucifix brandished aloft, nor the astrologer on his high platform, whispering tales of good fortune in the ear of some giddy girl. Here, too, we find the professional story-teller, with a little crowd round him, all open-mouthed at his tales of Moors and Saracens, of dragons and the fairy princess, of palaces, of strange forests, and of love. Suddenly, in the midst of the tumult, sounds the Angelus. There is a quick lull. Every one kneels down. Hats are raised. Then, having crossed themselves, they rise up and begin again, and from a thousand open lips floats out once more the sound of the charming dialect of Venice, sprightly as a bird's flight, lisping, laughing, with its liquid syllables, soft diphthongs, and delicate labials, tuned to those words of delight, those familiar diminutives, those tender pet names, that make of it less a language than a sweet whisper, a caress, an echo of a kiss.

The contemplation of such an existence was an amusement in itself. Four times every day De Brosse went out to see what was to be seen, and he asked for no better



recreation. All Venice, indeed, lived the life of the simple looker on.

And there was no refuge from this continual unrest. The very churches had become a rendezvous for the fashionable world, where, beneath some brilliant fresco by Tiepolo, one could listen to exquisite music, take stock of the beauties of the day, play with a dog when one was bored by the sermon, decipher the inscription on an old tomb, fidget, or make love. A refined form of pleasure this, with something of the savour of forbidden fruit.

Even the convents boasted of their *salons*. Protected by the most transparent of screens sat the nuns, in low dresses and with pearls in their hair, ready to receive the addresses of gallant abbés or free-hearted nobles. Fine ladies came to visit them, and all travellers of distinction. They could pay compliments with the best, nor, when the chocolate was handed round, were the charms of scandal quite unknown to them. Sometimes, too, they would permit the invasion of a train of revellers from a neighbouring *bal masqué*. Renunciation or contrition seems to have been the very last motive that influenced such ladies to take the veil. A certain religiously-minded lady of the Rezzonico family rejoiced in the title of *Sua Eccellenza Abbadessa reverendissima donna Maria Luigia principessa Rezzonico*; and another famous nun, a Cornaro, boasted that she received only visitors of princely rank. All endeavoured to take a part in the affairs of that world which they had once sworn to abandon, while the so-called *Ospedaletti* or Charity Schools were simply conservatoires of music, where white-robed orphan girls, adorned with bouquets of pomegranate, learnt the most voluptuous melodies the world has ever known. And the same thing went on everywhere. Nothing but laughter, frivolity, and abandonment, and the pleasure of the moment. Life was one great holiday. Goethe himself speaks of the strange, unforgettable magic of the place, and it is hardly to be wondered at that all Europe flocked there.

Throughout the eighteenth century, indeed, Venice was the city which inevitably attracted every one who had money or any time to waste. It was the metropolis of pleasure, the haven of the world's pleasure-seekers. Voltaire was scarcely exaggerating when he made it the scene of that strange episode in *Candide*, where the hero, dining in the company of six strangers, is amazed to discover that every one of them is a king!

With such a climate life at Venice could not fail to be a centre of gaiety. The air was so light, so limpid, it weighed on one no more heavily than the ripple left by a passing gondola on the clear surface of the lagoon. There was nothing heavy, or oppressive, or stern, nothing troublesome or difficult to be done. Life slipped by like a ray of light.

Work is not an effort of the brain. It is still a joyous distraction to the mind, the spontaneous fruit of a soul in holiday mood, and of an intellect at its ripest. No one studies very hard—*Omo studioso, magro moroso* ran the proverb—and only when leisure permits, when there is nothing else to do. Still people do study at times, in the interval between two entertainments, perhaps, in some little café near S. Giorgio Maggiore, or behind the scenes at the theatre with an old rouge-pot for ink-stand, or drinking a bottle of tokay and smoking a cigarette of Spanish tobacco, like Da Ponte, who in this way wrote in two months the libretti of three operas, one of which was Mozart's "Don Juan." When his inspiration began to flag he would ring the bell, and a pretty serving-maid would appear with a biscuit or a cup of chocolate, or it may be with nothing but her own fresh little face. She was only sixteen, but "she would sometimes sit by my side," says Da Ponte, "motionless, speechless, without the quiver of an eyelid; then regard me fixedly, smile very sweetly, sigh, and seem as though she were going to burst into tears. She had acted as my Calliope for the three operas which I had already written, and she maintained this position for all my compositions during the next ten years."

In such a state of existence everything durable was a source of *ennui*. Nothing passed too rapidly, except perhaps a firework. Character, money, intellect, all had lost their value and importance. Time flew by like a song. Money was lent, given away, or lost recklessly, for it was regarded with the delightful inconsequence that attaches to winnings from a game of chance. As for thought, it had evaporated long ago. And yet, people did sometimes think a little. "I have just been thinking, Ninetta, what would Love do if he could see you? Isn't that pretty?" Yes. But reflection, concentration, are quite out of date. There is only left vivacity, frivolity, and a readiness for adventure.

People had become the children of their own fancies and whims, and the only philosophy left was that which teaches its devotees to obey their own instincts and desires, and to follow every natural inclination. Such an one was Count Marin, "a man whom some would have called a philosopher, others merely a lazy-bones," or that Chevalier de Seingalt who, after a life entirely given over to gambling and fast living, cried out on his deathbed, "O God, and you my friends, I call you to witness that I lived a philosopher, and die a Christian!" And if one came to think of it, what was the point of being sad, biting one's nails, and taking so seriously what was, after all, of very little account? Why make a great fuss about nothing? Why seek out causes for unhappiness? Why sit down in bitterness and sourness as if such a life was a pleasure in itself? No. To the Devil with all such preachers and sermon-mongers, with their fastings and sallow faces. To the Devil with Aristotle and his long-winded dogmas. To the Devil with all those who turn the divine muse of poetry into a teacher of agriculture or theology! As if poetry did not consist in an outpouring of high spirits; as if it had not been for the sake of laughter that men had first begun to dance and to sing! "Let the very air you breathe ring with laughter," cries Gasparo Gozzi, "and

exclude from your notice as far as you can every painful and disagreeable thing." And in very fact it seemed almost as though such advice had been given in no idle spirit, and that misery, old age, and death itself had been blotted out of existence. Never had the word *tristo*, *sad*, kept so well its old Italian signification of *Cattivo*, *wicked*; never had the verb *to think* kept so clearly its old meaning of *to be sad*. Even the life of a beggar seemed an enviable career, seeing that, according to Johann-Christoph Maier, the German, it brought in to a clever exponent of the art as much as four or five livres in a single day. Unhappiness had signed a truce with the world. The old custom of wishing good luck to a man when he sneezed was fast dying out. There was no need for it. Misfortune or misadventure seemed unknown. There was nothing worse than a slight accident—an accident like those in Gozzi's comic catalogues, as for instance the being caught in a shower with a new silk cloak on, or having run out of your supply of Spanish tobacco.

The thought of death was studiously avoided, and if it did perchance intrude itself it was brushed quickly aside, as one might flick away a troublesome mosquito. The fact of mortality was hidden deep in the illusions of a happy present, like a coffin under a heap of flowers. But when it came at last it was welcomed with a smile, a flash of wit. As for instance by Algarotti, who, at the last moment, when they were putting on his head a little ribboned night-cap, cried out gaily, "*Mò capperi, mi volete fare un gran bel morto!*" In such a world, so pleasant and self-satisfied, there was no room for an Alcestis. "I am in love with myself," wrote Casanova, and Lamberti's neat little definition of a misanthrope is meant to deride as much as to describe him.

"A certain lord  
Who was always snappy  
When his friends could afford  
To think themselves happy."

Nor has the century a better specimen of the hypochondriac to offer than Goldoni's *Clelio*, who, on hearing of some catastrophe or accident, spits on the ground and cries "God save us!" but is soon restored to his customary high spirits by a little gay company and a bottle of good wine.

If we are to believe the mythology of the ancient Persians, which identified the spirit of Evil with the spirit of Denial, then it is certain that the eighteenth century held no trace of evil in its composition. It ignored the meaning of a negative, saying yes to everything—yes to every adventure, to every opportunity, yes to the veiled enticement of every pretty face, yes to the call of every caprice or desire. For a fit of depression there was only one cure, very simple and always efficacious. "*Recipe no ghe pensar. Recipe divertirsi. Recipe sior sè et ste cosse.*" *Ennui* was the one terror left to life, that *ennui* which gentle Renier Michiel feared more than pain itself. The only remedy for such a condition was to be found in that kind of distraction which was practised by the best spirits of the time, by Rosalba and Goldoni, by Manin the doge, and by Conti the ecclesiastic, who was doctor, metaphysician, and mathematician all in one, and united the profundity of a Leibnitz with the wisdom of a Newton or the learning of a Bayle, and studied simply to entertain himself—but attributed no greater importance to his studies than to "a day's hunting or a game of cards."

It would seem that in those days it was always fine, that the sky was cloudless, and there were no shadows. What passed for shade in this crystal landscape would have been light elsewhere, so clear, so luminous it was. The flicker left on white marble by a swallow on the wing, the outline of a tiny three-cornered hat cast on the smooth forehead of some laughing girl, the back of a silver-crested wave as it falls on the bright surface of water, are such things shadows? No. But such were the shadows of Venice—fine, fragile things, light as a feather on the wind.



Life was a primrose path. Happiness and kindness greeted one on every side. It was a world of placid unconsciousness, of universal contentment, and of an infinite capacity for enjoyment.

In cafés, clubs, and private letters the trivialities of the day—the latest theatrical scandal or ecclesiastical sensation—formed the only subject of discussion. And there was always plenty of food for gossip. The Duke of Courlande has arrived with his beautiful wife; they are having a most enjoyable time, but are keeping very much to themselves. The fascinating Madame Depretis Venier has so far overcome Count Pepoli with her charms that, in order to keep her from his rival, my Lord Widmann, he is giving her an allowance of 3000 ducats a year. My Lord Cowper is delighted with Venice, and also, it is whispered, with my Lady Giovannina del Colloredo. At Rome, the Abbé Cornaro has lost 17,000 écus at the tables. In the Merceria, Briati has on view a magnificent writing-cabinet made entirely of crystal. A new *Miserere* has been performed at the *Incurabili*—a singularly fine and pleasing work. Pacchierotti has arrived, and is being saluted in the streets as though he were the emperor himself. Is there any truth in the rumour that the Grand Duchess of Russia has embraced Contarina Barbarigo? At any rate this much is certain: the lady has been invited to go to St. Petersburg—and from what is known of her it is highly probable that she has accepted. Giuseppe de' Giuli, Prior of St. Aponal, is dead, and he died, it is said, in a fit of rage, brought on by some impertinent woman; and quite likely too, for he was over 66 years old. Pier-Gregorio Buoncompagni Atoboni has assumed the dress of a noble. The Pregadi have been discussing the proposed enlargement of the *Fuosa*. If it had not been for the influence of Cecilia Tron, Bacelli would have been hissed off the stage the other night. So tongues wagged.

"*Abié un pochetto de flemma*"! says Felice, in the play, to her boor of a husband. Well, people followed her advice



to some purpose. They walked about lazily under the arcades, they went to the bookshop for the latest scandal, or to Monsieur Galimbert's to be shaved. Or perhaps, on a wet day, they were forced to stay at home and watch the raindrops trickling down the window-pane. Or they played cards : *cinque . . . sette . . . Il sette non lo tengo*. Or, out of doors again, sat idly at a café table with legs crossed, offering a friend a pinch of snuff, ordering a cup of coffee from the waiter, asking him questions about the passers-by. And then there were the newspapers—the gazettes—with their fare of anecdotes, funny stories, and advertisements. “Close to the Banco al Giro a barber has just opened a shop where you can be shaved admirably with balm-water.” Or again, in the *Nuova Gazzetta* for April 17, 1762, we read : “The Lord Abbot Chiari is at Brescia, his native city, and his friends will learn with pleasure that by the death of his uncle, Chiari, the lawyer, he has come into quite a large fortune.” Or again, something less distinguished : “A few days ago a cat belonging to an old woman of S. Margherita gave birth to five kittens, two of which have the head of a dog and the body of a cat. Any one desiring to see them should apply at the hairdresser's.”

Just to pass the time, perhaps, you get into conversation with the stranger who is sitting sunning himself on the bench by your side. You tell him of the strange dream you had last night, and if a mole, a crocodile, or a piece of straw figures in it, your unknown friend will start up suddenly and dash away to the gaming-tables, for you have given him a good omen ! You are left smoking a long clay pipe, or you start to walk in the direction of the Rialto for a change of air, or you watch the arrival of the boat from Padua, or pay a call on some lady friend. You whisper some tit-bit of gossip into a friend's ear, or read him the latest lampoon by the light of a lantern, then laugh together discreetly. You hum over to yourself some little song, and walk in time to the music. Or

perhaps you stop to watch some charlatan of the streets, or buy a tartlet from an old woman, or just kick your heels in the silence. And at last you come to die, like a tired traveller returning home in the evening.

To live carelessly, with no thought of the morrow, to be content with one's lot, to ward off the wicked onslaughts of melancholy, and to banish dull care as so much useless encumbrance, such was the aim of existence. And blest was he who could model his life on that of the eccentric old Moorish philosopher who, as Gozzi tells us, used to wend his way through the city, ringing a bell, and bidding all men be happy. And people were happy, free, and inconsequent, in this atmosphere soft as wool, where everything was fresh and clean, where the plash of the gondola soothed like a cradle song. "Ah!" cried Goethe to his friends prisoned at Weimar, "would that I could pass on to you but one breath of this delightful existence!"

Never in the history of the world had there been a time when the element of tragedy was so conspicuously absent from the scheme of things. Never had human life been so void of all heroism. And never had there been such joyous, childish laughter in the world, as at this moment of termination to a period that reeked of passion and blood.

Laughter was the order of the day, and Venice herself counted as little more in the world than a quaint anachronism.

For she never allowed the visitor to forget that he was on an island which, like every true island, had a life peculiar and bizarre. To a visitor from the mainland everything was curious and amusing. He was confronted with unexpected evidences of an alien civilisation, outlandish fashions, strange and immemorial ceremonies. The brazen crocodile on its column, the contortion of the crab on the wall, the comical wigs of the nobles, lawyers, and doctors, worn simply for the sake of effect, were the same as they had always been, and witnessed to that

strange genius of extravagance and caprice that ever brooded over the city. It was this genius that had endowed her artists with their spirit of irony and whim, and had found a place for the Fool's Cap among the emblems of the Republic. Wit was synonymous with intellect, and, according to Baretti, no one had a welcome anywhere unless he had a pretty sense of humour. Some nonsense or other was always on foot. Goldoni thought that "the basis of character was lightheartedness," and the Abbé Richard used to say that Venice was the fatherland of Fun.

There was plenty of fun, at any rate, at the theatres. There were seven of them, and while waiting for the curtain to rise it was the fashion to see who could make the biggest fool of himself. Rossi, in his *Costumi veneziani*, tells us something of the scene: "Shameless, uncontrolled laughter, coarse, strident shouts from the men, cackling from the women, cat-calls, cries in imitation of cocks and hens, sneezings, coughings, yawns, every kind of racket and shindy." Such was the noisy, childish custom of the crowd. And on the stage, too, the behaviour of the actors was equally fantastic. Without the slightest warning Belisarius would give one of his guards a cut with his whip, Rosamund, tucking up her stately robe, would begin to dance the *furlana*, and in the *Medea* the heroine herself must needs strike up on a sudden with the popular Venetian song: *Mi pizzichi, mi morischi!*

If you seek for an excuse, a reason for all this, it may be found in the fact that the Venetians were blest with a free, unrestrained temperament, a vitality that was always demanding expression, and a spirit of *abandon* that made everything seem as light and as negligible as air. Pain was insupportable to this people who had suffered once so keenly. They could not bear with it even on the stage; and if any character in a play was so unfortunate as to be killed, he was sure to be called before the curtain at the close of the act and

roundly applauded. *Bravo i morti!* cried the good-natured audience.

Once the Abbé Lazzarini had the hardihood to present a tragedy called *Ulisse il Giovane* which was so filled with scenes of terror and misfortune that it quickly emptied the theatre. By way of revenge some one produced a parody of the work entitled *Rutzvanscad il Giovine*, an ultra-super-tragical-tragedy, which contained a scene in which, all the actors having gone off to a battle, the stage was left empty, until the audience stamped their feet and clamoured so loudly for the continuance of the play that the prompter came out of his box and made the following announcement with the greatest gravity and decorum: "Ladies and gentlemen, I see you are waiting for some one to come back with tidings of the battle. I am sorry you will wait in vain. They are all killed."

Laughter came so easily and naturally, like the unforced laughter of happy girls to whom the whole world seems made for nothing but hilarity. It was the laughter of children, with no malice, no check, except when matters became really serious; and the serious things of life were the gaming-table and the ballet. Seriousness seemed a sham, and even beauty cloyed sometimes, so that, after one of those splendid regattas on the Grand Canal which travellers have described in such glowing colours, an irresistible desire for fun would sometimes break out, to satisfy which an amazing parody would be organised, and feeble, shaky, old greybeards be set to run a regatta of wheel-barrows along the bank of the canal.

And it was an age of practical jokes. They were all the fashion, and middle-aged men and even people of high rank found amusement in pranks worthy of a school playground. At the *Café Quattro S. Marchi*, for instance, a place much frequented by people of importance, some merry fellows came one evening disguised as myrmidons of the law, and carried off one of the habitués, a man over

sixty years of age, and shut him up in a place which shall be nameless under the Rialto. There he was constrained to pass the night in the belief that he had been cast into a dungeon. And there was also that popular institution, the Fool's Club, the *Casino degli Asini*, admission to which could only be secured by the commission of some public act of foolery. It is said that a certain lawyer who aspired to membership could think of no better pretext than, in the open street, to blow his nose upon the violet robe of one of the Canons of San Marco, who was himself a member of the Club. "I shall brand you before the members," cried the enraged abbot, "not only as a donkey but as a pig to boot." The lawyer, however, gained his point.

Parodies and practical jokes—satires and silly stories! What fun it all was! To realise this one has only to cast one's eye over the titles of the popular books of the day, or skim the pages of contemporary memoirs—those of Casanova, for instance, or of Da Ponte, Goldoni, Carlo Gozzi, or Antonio Longo. And sifting from the Gazettes (those storehouses of anecdote) something of the detail of Venetian life, one sees that the sense of comedy was its most essential characteristic. For comedy was not confined to the theatres. It flourished everywhere—in the law courts, where to watch the lawyers was as good as a play; on the passenger boat to Padua, the scene of innumerable little farces; in the shops, the drawing-rooms, and above all in the open street. That was the veritable home of the burlesque, and there one might witness any day comedies worthy of Goldoni, played to the life. Well might Lalande, the French astronomer, hold that in Italy, and above all in Venice, it was Punchinello that was the real ruler of private life, art, the theatre, and the Church itself.

Elsewhere—at Paris, for example, or in England—people were always trying to be as like one another as they could. Uniformity was an ideal. But here in Venice there was a



mania for individuality which bordered sometimes on the grotesque. It was as though this ancient and decaying organism were dissipating itself into a thousand caricatures, queer silhouettes drawn in shadow on some sunny wall. The result was that no one was afraid to appear original; and though a vivid sense of the ridiculous was universal, the fear of ridicule was unknown. The very word was destitute of any offensive significance, for to be ridiculous was not to be stupid, while to act as a source of merriment to one's friends was accounted a privilege. Wit was "a sublime talent," and Casanova, among whose unpublished works is a "Device to make one Laugh Heartily," regarded its absence in the eloquent Rousseau as a serious blot on his character. As a proof that the Venetians really tried to live up to this ideal there might be quoted many an amusing story. In the *Memorie of Longo*, we read of a certain priest who was famous for his scandalous tales, and received a salary from a little company of patrons. Among them was a certain *Giovanni Bonfadini*, who threatened to give the priest a good thrashing if he ever caught him saying anything in his favour. Another priest, Testa by name, was in great request in society. It was his hobby to collect spiders' webs. He was inclined to be cynical, and lived in a wretched hovel with four leaky windows and no floor to it. A rat kept him company and shared his bed. He was a vegetarian, and it was his boast that he himself prepared his food in the back of the café which he was in the habit of frequenting. His Highness the Doge Manin and the illustrious Senators Alvice Emo and Bernardo Memmo used to help him over the job. We must also mention the eccentric Count Alessandro Pepoli, Senator of Bologna, but a member of the Venetian nobility. He was so versatile that in a single day he would assume the rôles of tragic poet, playwright, epic poet, dancer, acrobat, coachman, gondolier, musician, flute-player, lackey, orator, billiard-master, and juggler.

But enough. It was a joyous life, a frivolous life, a life where everything was very small—very little. . . .

*“Messetta, bassetta e donnetta”—*

“In the morning a little mass, in the afternoon a little party, in the evening a little lady”—so ran the proverb, and these diminutives are significant.

For everything nowadays was so small, just as formerly everything had been so big. Little things for little minds, little intrigues, little emotions. In life as well as in conversation the diminutive was paramount, and the moment anything showed signs of a tendency to expansion, it was immediately suppressed. Thus Tiepolo, when he began to acquire a reputation, soon found his name turned into the more familiar *Tiepoletto*; and history itself was fast degenerating into the merest anecdotage. Epic poetry was giving way to the new craze for sonnets, and small cabinet pictures were beginning to take the place of the fresco. Babiole, the little pet dog belonging to the wife of the French ambassador, was honoured by a long poem from Goldoni, while genius could be induced to sparkle by no loftier themes than a fly, a beauty spot, or a silver spoon.

## CHAPTER III

### FESTIVAL, CARNIVAL, AND VILLEGGIATURA

A DAMSEL swaying to the minuet ; maskers of the Italian Comedy squatting on the steps beside her ; lithe figures watching, propped against a wall, mezzetino and truffaldino ; cloaks flying, bodices unbared, and strawberries on the grass ; this vision Watteau called "A Venetian Festival."

Even such a memory, it may be, those fairy scenes left with old Europe ; fairy dreams awakened, yonder in that magic crystal, in the heart of that peerless city, risen like Venus from the sea. Such dreams gave welcome, utterance, and pomp to the dying smile of the Old Order. They were the last fireworks of its triumph. They were the sunset splendour ; or, as it were, a ball-room bouquet, in its full bloom and gorgeousness, touched already by the lips of death. One last movement of the symphony ; one rocket more in the rose-pink twilight ; one farewell ecstasy, more dazzling, more frenzied than all ; and then, after the violins are still, the black-mouthed cannon answer them, rumbling upon the high-roads.

"The word fête, that magic word, is never uttered without rapture." Alas ! she believed her words, that innocent lady, niece of the old Doge, the gentle Giustina Renier-Michiel. Devout and tranquil though she was, had she not watched those stately pageants ? Had she not survived them ; and even at the grave sought solace for the death of youth and the death of her country, in telling their joyous annals to the world ? Yes, she believed her words, and all her childish age believed with

her, who had found happiness in pleasure, who had made a festival of life, and would have that life adorned with yet more festivals.

In eighteenth century Venice there is no end to the festivals. Down the year they stretch, like the masted oriflammes and arches down a way of triumph. All is festal here, even the ceremony of taking the veil. To pronounce her solemn vows the patrician's daughter goes, on an azure carpet strewn with flowers, between white statues and white orange trees, amid the obeisance of purpled senators, to the sound of merry music ; while, in the background, through the great bay-window, the sea sparkles gaily. No day goes by in that Republic that Mount Olympus of history, but is glorified by some memory from the past ; not a day but a Saint is honoured, a hero remembered, a prior elected, a relic shown, an oratorio played, a pageant presented, specious or moving, pompous or grotesque.

An ambassador is to enter the city. State banquets are proclaimed in the Ducal Hall. Solemn processions advance upon the Piazza. Regattas are prepared between the Palace banks. Arabesques of gold on glowing tapestries display a multitude of gods and goddesses, of heroes of history and fable, with bright armour and floating plumes. Flowery gondolas present Venus in her triumph, Apollo and his chariot, and Asia carrying China into bondage : one of them, thrice changing as it goes, like a floating fairyland, portrays the story of Neptune, leading Cybele, feasting Phoebus, worshipping Cynthia. The artisans, the Arsenalotti, the Six Colleges, the Nine Congregations, the orphan girls of the Four Hospitals, the Canons of St. Mark and St. Peter, the senators, the nobles, the patriarchs, and the Doge meet together with their sumptuous trains, carrying statues, torches, lances, candelabra, fruits, and gold and silver emblems. The bells peal, and before the sound of the shrill fifes, the trumpets, and the drums, doves fly away

in fluttered companies. The shops of the drapers, iron-mongers, and goldsmiths vie for taste and cunning with each other, in dressing their shop-windows and embellishing them quaintly ; with a few dead snakes an apothecary weaves garlands and festoons "in the newest fashion" ; with tomatoes, a handful of parsley, and a flower, a market-woman makes as brave a show. To see the festival all the townsmen throng, some to the tall windows crowned by the pointed arch and trefoil ornament, some to the balconies gaudily dressed with cloth of gold and merry with laughter, others again to the lowly rooms among the funnel chimneys, while, in some remote campiello, amid the smells from a hundred frying-pans, and the festoons of leaves and paper, the common folk take hands and sing the praises of some parish saint. Fêtes of civic pomp, fêtes of religion and courtesy, fêtes for the passage of a Prince, the election of a Doge, the entry of an ambassador, fêtes perpetual ! On Christmas night, in the illumination of the Piazza, more wax is burnt away than in all the rest of Italy throughout the year. And during the festival given in honour of Marco Foscarini, "countless women," say the Gazettes, "complained of pinches given them in the crowd."

On the 1st of February, the Doge, followed by an escort, robed in scarlet silk, and wearing on his silver hair the ducal crown, goes to receive a straw hat from the men of Santa Maria Formosa ; on the 1st of May he goes to present a bouquet to the virgins of San Giorgio Maggiore ; and the Dalmatian bodyguard lines his torch-lit road with standards raised and trumpets sounding. The men of Poreglia come to kiss his cheek, and he gives each man a bright carnation for his sweetheart. On Palm Sunday he bids his courtiers throw a bevy of pigeons from his loggia to the crowd. On Ascension Thursday he casts with his own hands the betrothal-ring of the Republic into the sea.

And on that day of days, when the *Bucentor* returns



from its triumphal progress, Venice is no longer a city of the sea. The water, boundless and mysterious, that glides and flows between one's fingers, that water which clasps the city in firm and supple embrace, is vanished. It is covered now, and clad with a thousand peottas, galleys, barges, skiffs, feluccas, gondolas, all filled with flowers and swathed in bunting, a robe even more sumptuous than it wore yesterday, when it mirrored all the pomp of heaven. To-day brocades trail in it, fringes of gold are steeped in it; in dresses of pink or azure, silver-hemmed, boatmen as nimble as boys seem to hang lightsomely in the very air. The Grand Canal is become a motley moving carpet of silk, satin, and velvet, precious stones, and flowers; the grace and the gestures of the ball-room are outdone. Parasols open, gilded oars flash, muslin and ribbon rise and fall, where ladies lie on their cushions as upon beds of love; the airs of the musicians, the cries of the gondoliers, the waving handkerchiefs, the fluttering fans, the smiles on lovely lips; while on white necks fantastic shadows are playing, jewels are sparkling, diamonds ablaze, and pearls faintly aglow; all this goes up and down incessantly, flows on and passes by. And the serene palaces watch the splendour pass.

But the maddest holiday of all, remembered by the whole world, for it made Venice the world's Pleasure City, was the Carnival.

The Carnival of Venice! The words have lost none of their ancient power. The veil of our eyes is rent as we utter them. Even as we smile, merry phantoms seem to beckon us; exquisite dead graces push away their coffin lids; the diaphanous air throbs with light laughter; quavers and semi-quavers gambol in the stave.

Six months of the year it lasts, from October to Christmas, from Twelfth Night to Lent; on Ascension Day it starts again for two weeks; and again upon St. Mark's Day, and whenever a Doge is elected, whenever

a Procurator is chosen, on the least occasion always, on the slightest pretext. As long as it endures all the people go about in masks—all the people, from Doge to kitchen-maid. In masks men and women do business and buy fish, write their letters, pay their visits, and plead their causes in the courts. With a mask over his face a man may say and do as he pleases ; for the State hath sanctioned his mask, and will protect it. In his mask he seeks admittance to drawing-rooms, churches, convents, to the ball, the Palace, the Ridotto. There he may take his ease, he may read in his armchair, but he must not forget the law of Carnival : barriers hold, authority avails, and dignity exists no more ; there are no more lordlings now, nor beggars kissing their long sleeves ; no more is heard of spy or nun, of *sbirro* or *zentildonna*, rope-walker or inquisitor, poor man or alien ; there is but one rank, and one character, *Sior Maschera* ; but one costume, and one free people, garmented, steeped, confounded in delight. A scrap of white satin on the face, a black silk hood upon the shoulders ; and by virtue of this comic livery, the aristocratic city becomes a democracy ; and the loose garb of Laughter levels all her sons.

Truly the mask is more than a disguise : 'tis an incognito. Beneath it a man walks in the very night of mystery, nameless and accountable to none ; it is the badge of folly, the death-warrant of distinctions, the phylactery of nonsense. Who saucily accosts, or whisks us with a pointed elbow ; who stealthily beckons, who draws us through a maze of narrow streets, who sits with us at *biribi* or coffee ; we know not, nor what sly white slipper settles trembling on our shoe. The mask drives away diffidence, covers all shame, and keeps all blushes hid, emboldens intercourse, and prompts adventure ; better than bolts and bars, better than snug retreats, to guard the manifold meshes of intrigue. Like an author of the Old Comedy, it breathes forth

alibi and spreads imbroglio, consumes with a merry exultation, and tickles life with the spur of irony. "The mask," says Flaminia in the *Vecchio Bizarro*, "is the finest commodity in the world." And so, all wear the mask, from Doge to kitchen-maid, yea, even to the Papal Nuncio.

Carnival is proclaimed, and, in a moment, light soars to the soul as a pennon to the masthead. Folly shakes her bells, fiddles are tuned, and all feet are agog to dance ; every heart is a-flutter, in every corner Cupids play at hide-and-seek. Let business wait until to-morrow !—if, indeed, such a thing were known in the city that care defiles not. Certainly to-day there is no business ; to-day there are no books. The Piazza, the Piazzetta, and the Mole are all covered with a mushroom growth of stalls and booths, canvas and calico, placards upon posts, banners flying in the wind, and tapering poles, with a monkey at the top, sucking a lemon amid furious grimaces. Such an orgy of colour is there, such a pandemonium of jollity, shot with the somersaults and swollen by the reed-pipes of all the braggarts and burlesques of the world. Upon a hundred booths are shown a hundred marvels : Dutch babies, Irish giants, Croatian women, canaries that count up to thirty, live elephants, tame lions, or real rhinoceri. Then it is that the Piazza, where one lives, eats, and sleeps, acquires its full physiognomy, gives back its fullest echo. From the Merceria, from San Geminiano, the people debouch upon it "like water from the water-pipes." This way and that forty thousand people, or a hundred thousand—who can tell ?—swagger and throng and bustle ; all Europe, all the East, have poured their habits and their jargons hither ; herè meet all vagrants and all mountebanks : Trinsi of Pistoga, the painless dentist ; the Cosmopolite, who drives a coach-and-twelve, and sells the balm of the elixir ; the Nameless One, who, having graduated at Canterbury, driven the plague from Verona, and

refused an invitation to Prussia from the King, stands upon a platform, with two mummers of the Playhouse on each side of him, answering all questions, and dispensing every remedy. All these are here ; and with them, what a multitude ! their feet sounding on the marble as the flow of mighty waters. And, behind them, pale grey and dim purple, the Basilica stands forth, as a mirage in the desert.

Now there is no more day nor night, no more appointed hour for sleep or dinner, no more restraint, stability, or rule. At midnight as at midday every hostelry is open, every dish is ready, and supper laid in lodging-house and inn. Strings of coloured lanterns dance and quiver in the air, shells and bright ribbons hang from violins. Time is overset, the brain turned upside down, and the understanding topsy-turvy ; quicksilver flows in the veins, and white confetti falls like snow ; and ever and anon the gondolas unload their cargo of quips and choruses, of cornets, posies, cards, and kisses, of merry games and dainty parcels ; or take on board their freight of laughter, changing soon to sighs, and melting in the distance. A low voice calls beneath a balcony ; 'tis hushed. The city reels with frolic : merry scrapes and soft refrains, whispered words, feasts in the candle-light, and eyes dark-circled ; all the husks that Fancy winnows. Every theatre is open ; and, day and night incessantly, that sound is heard, the ebb and flow of great waters, made on the marble by the feet of multitudes.

But anon the mask palls, and gives place to the darling child of Fancy, that herald of surprises : *Il Travestito*. Nay, was not this same influence here already in the streets, in the frescoes, in the habits of this city of motley ? But now this power is marshalled and acclaimed. All men do it homage, dressing themselves up in every character ; as soldier, satyr, Moor, as Turk or king, or devil, with hookah, sceptre, or



Vice's bladder in their hands. The maskers of the Italian Comedy lavish on the streets their treasure of droll and delicate profiles, of grotesque and dainty lines, from the wild-cat moustachio of Scapin to the grace of Zerbinette, from the goggles of Tartaglia to the woollen cap of Pantalone, from the hare's foot of Brighella to the cock's feather of Scaramouche and the teasing smile of Columbine. The masquerade is enriched by the familiar forms of the street-hawkers, whose cries wake the amber stillness of the morning—the cake-seller, the flower-seller, the seller of ratsbane ; one such mends broken plates and glasses, tinkers pans, castrates cats, another sells lemons, fennel, and sponges. Casanova's head is thrust into the white cap of Pierrot, Goldoni is changed into a charlatan, Count Pepoli, hastening from the Council Hall, slips on the sleeve of Harlequin. Here is one dressed as a girl-mother, seduced and forsaken, with the child for which a poodle wrapt in a napkin does duty ; tweak the dog's tail and the baby squalls. Here is a marmot-keeper, an advocate, a whining Jew, a victim of the " Mal francese." Thoughtful men wear the dress of Germans, phlegmatic people pass for Swiss, and, as the Gazettes tell us, " there were a good few disguised as murderers." With lusty knee and elbow-play a donkey-train of Calabrians fights a passage through the crowd, a squad of Spanish infantry follows, and begins to drill ; succeeded in their turn by a troop of *Ciocciari* playing on the bagpipes, and again by an allegory taken from a fan, presenting the Devil and the Seven Deadly Sins under the likeness of a soldier, a courtesan, a miser, a grocer, a lawyer, a doctor, and a vagabond. For such disguise almost anything will suffice ; a pillow-case, an ass's snout, a syringe-pipe. There are men on stilts and men on crutches ; men walking on all fours, pretending to be bears, and men astride a wooden horse. There are striped gowns and pointed caps, turbans, loose cloaks of motley, spangled finery



false noses, the whole wardrobe of Folly, the whole panoply of Laughter. There are women in Turkish trousers, women with moustaches, women with a goitre falling to the breast. There are dervishes, muftis, legions of clowns and merry-andrews. Each one plays his part, sustains his character, spouts his claptrap, and bandies chaff with all and sundry. The lawyer pleads, gesticulates, thrusts out his fingers, clenches his fist and plants it under your nose, fans himself, sponges his face and bares his breast, buttons himself up again, and roars and howls with fury, just as he did in the Courts, where Goethe, Grosley, and Baretti found him. The mender of chairs intones his dismal chant, the urchins turn their cart-wheels, Harlequin butts the walls, Polichinello munches macaroni, Pierrot falls from the moon. Three Pantaloons go by, and Franceschina makes horns at them, while a gang of louts and sharpers dance to their own guitars. The Irishman is giddy, the Frenchman impudent, the Spaniard proud and gloomy. A clown dallies with a milkmaid from Friouli. Columbine throws her dimpled arm about the neck of a glass-worker of Murano. A gipsy, a lacemaker of Chioggia, and Corielle sit at table with a *cura-gattoli*. And between the various groups, hailing, accosting, and bantering one another, a whole comedy is improvised, swift, keen, and sparkling. Meanwhile the crowd goes to and fro, booing and clapping, interrupting, halting, moved to interest, roused to passion, by every tint and turn of this unprepared kaleidoscope. Brats blow their penny trumpets. Laughter mingles, quips fly, cries ring out, songs float abroad, as fast, as lusty, as ambiguous, as though they fell from the car of the Magnifico in the Florence of the Medicis. And whenever the noise is hushed, we hear once more that sound of waters flowing, that sound of feet upon the marble.

Folly with her retinue soon overflows the Piazza, storms the cafés, invades the theatres, pierces the by-

lanes of green water up to the *campielli*, where the people dance in rings, and spreads over the network of *calli* and canals as far as the *campi* of San Stefano, of San Fantin, of San Giovanni at Bragora, and of Santa Maria Formosa, where every day throughout the Carnival, except Friday, when the cattle are slaughtered, mastiffs are set on cows in the *Caccie al toro*. As Shrove Tuesday draws near, the fun grows faster; banquets, balls, plays, and acrobatic shows; the *Forze d'Ercole*; the *Caccia* of the Doge's gentlewomen; the procession of the smiths and butchers; while, hovering lightly over us, on a rope stretched from the top of the Campanile to the Palace loggia, a ballet dancer sprinkles roses and sonnets on the crowd. Nothing can break this Dionysian chorus; not public danger, nor public mourning—nay, not the death of the Doge himself, which, in 1789, was long kept secret that the cup of the people's joy might be full, and no drop fall to the ground untasted. In the frenzy of delight men say and do they know not what. On Shrove Tuesday they discharge their fireworks at high noon. And at midnight, when the bells proclaim the advent of Ash Wednesday, they stare at each other in mazed bewilderment. . . .

Then, when the last echo of the Carnival has died away, the revelry begins indeed. For the true holiday of the Venetians is not the world-wide Carnival; it is the Villeggiatura or festal sojourn in the country.

For to this people, pent in their isle of stone, there comes a homesick yearning for the land. The spell of Nature binds them one and all; their wishes and their dreams are ever flying yonder, far from the barren marble to the greensward and the trees; to the songs and fragrant smells, to all the life that burgeons in the tender shoots or gushes in the springs. Not one but sighs for that unapproachable beyond, not one but groans in banishment; seeking, as best he can, to beguile his exile by tending a flower in a pot, by planting a tree in a courtyard,

by carrying soil to some tiny plot of ground, and laying out upon it one of those wee artificial gardens, which meet us in Venice unawares like the fringe of an oasis, which charm us like a nook in Paradise. And so at length, when the last rocket of the Carnival is fired, when the *Sensà* is over and the holidays are come, the impatient swarms of pleasure-seekers, dismissing to the deuce their flutes and *biribi*, their cards and spangled cloaks, joyfully take flight . . .! and, in a trice, Venice is empty—silent.

Yes, Venice fills her streets with silence, and shuts her gates to dream; hearkening to the boom of mosquitoes in the sun, to the gossip of tattlers on the threshold. “*Omnia silent*,” wrote Ballarini to his master; “the lords of Venice are scattered in the country.”

Yonder, about La Mira, about Dolo, skirting the Brenta and the highway to Treviso, behold a hundred and thirty summer palaces! Let us call forth from oblivion that sunlit city, built up of marble on the greensward! Let us evoke its pleasures one by one: the white statues on the turf at Altichiero, and at Valinarana the myths of Tiepolo limned upon the wall, at Strà the hippogriff of bronze that stands on a column of pink stone between the stalls of the horses! Let us name the great gilt ball-room with its musicians’ gallery, and seventy guest-chambers in a row; let us remember the fantastic benches, the smooth lawns, the labyrinths, the altars, the coffee-kiosks, and the leafy pleasancess, the little rococo shrines among the groves!

And between the invaders of this happy wilderness there is a perpetual strife of luxury; for the most sumptuous equipage, the most prodigal display, the most bounteous hospitality. Till now these people have husbanded their strength; they have but *tasted* pleasure; they have hoped, forborne, put by, till now. Thrice welcome is this happy season! The *villeggiatura* sets us wholly free; it is the Carnival without the mask; ’tis Folly

with her face uncovered ; leisure within leisure, a feast amid the festival, an orb of brightest light within the sun. Once, it may be, on the edge of cloak or gondola, Venice wore a tinge of mourning. Now all trace of that is gone, unless it be still found in the ebony handles of the guitars, which make by contrast the terrace roses and the fair players' fingers rosier yet ; unless it be up yonder, on the saffron wall, the black letters of the old dial's motto, *Horas non numero nisi serenas* : " I count the hours of sunshine only."

Well said, old dial. All life is a procession of bright hours ; of hours unblemished, spun and woven of sunlight. All others die, forgotten, swallowed by the gulf, as though they had not been. If heaven and the heart smile not, the time is empty. By its joys we measure life ; by its beams we count the day. So Venice, that filled all life with pleasure, fills all the countryside with picnicking.

Picnics upon the grass and on the water ; hunting parties in white buckskin with facings of mauve silk ; rides through the forest over soft red moss and shimmering dew ; cool banquets in the glade, spread upon lace with cups of silver, pastries peeping from the dish, and bottles bubbling in the attendant's hand ; plays in the gilt reception room ; masked frolics on the river ; unpublished operas of Paisiello set to Casti's words : the visions of Boccaccio are fulfilled ! Lovers awake from the pages of the *Decameron*.

Pageants approach in the translucent air—ladies and lords and stately cardinals : their flowered skirts and hoods of purple, frosted wigs and shoe-buckles, their bodices tight-laced, showing the full rich bosom, the folds of the long cloaks falling in cascades of silk about the heels, diaper the grass with a rustling wave of colour. On yonder terrace with the marble balustrade, in the shadow of an ancient statue, a minuet is dancing ; under the fir-trees the musicians play, fiddle and fife and double

bass ; a ruff, a string of pearls about her neck, and a black domino across her eyes, with one hand gathering up her skirt, with the other resting her fan upon her thigh, a lady is reversing in the dance ; a gentleman with a long goat's beard is her *vis-à-vis* ; masked revellers watch the fun ; two of them steal off under the same yellow sunshade. Along the banks of the Brenta, which the sonneteers have swollen into a "mighty flood," boats dressed with flags and hung with lanterns convey their harmony and brilliance over the dark water. Gorgeous coaches rattle through the dozing village, beating sparks from the grass-grown pavements. Cupids with wings of gossamer peep from behind the branches. In the air float the soft words of country lovers. Beneath a quincunx in an avenue a gold-laced gallant hunts his rhyme ; behind a well-trimmed box-tree in a labyrinth, with finger upraised, a gossip hunts her flea ; a merry damsel, out of breath with running, sinks upon a bench and throws her head back, laughing still. In the moonlight two madcap girls have doffed their shoes and stockings by the edge of the great stone basin ; they pause upon a marble step, their skirts lifted above their knees ; while a bowing cavalier exhorts them with a madrigal. A marquise drives past with her six horses, and an old toady compares her to Aurora. Sometimes, in the early morning, when he goes to water the flower-beds, a ripe old gardener picks up a crumpled sonnet or a glove.

The language of a rosebud, the language of a fan, the language of a fiddle-string, these all Venetians understand.

The day is but a series of delights tasted in common, little vanities enjoyed together, voluptuous nights of rapture, shared in safety, far from the jealous eye of the Censor of the Revels. The toilet, coffee, cards, excursions, music, balls, and comedies engross this people ; they live and die in holiday humour. Held fast by a



chain of flowers, Time frolics and forgets his nature. Mischief tugs the sleeve of Leisure. Sprites of mirth and ravishment gambol on the green, from the hour of noon, when my lady wakes, to the first glow of dawn, when the company "retires to rest by the light of the sun." At Zola, in the house of Francesco Albergati the Magnificent, where the society of Venice loved to meet, the guests allot the morning to the hairdresser, to their coffee, and to chapel. After mass, comes a bevy of peasant maidens in their Sunday best, with an offering of firstfruits for the Lord of the Manor, who gives them kisses in exchange. Dinner consists of dainties and choice dishes. All grave debate is banished, but not good sense, good counsel, and good humour. After the meal the guests ride out in coaches or on horseback. Sometimes a whole caravan sets off in company; one takes the spit and one the frying-pan, one carries the wine and one the small birds in the net, and all go off together to some woodland glen, there to make ready a savoury *polenta*, seasoned with "bravos" and impromptu verses!

In the evening there is dancing, cards, and theatricals. At his villa on the Brenta, Antonio Longo bids fifty-three of his friends to a masquerade, and invites them to enter two boats, the one adorned with eighteen musicians dressed as Moors, the other filled with twenty-four peasants dressed as Quakers. "We were bound," he writes, "for Dolo, where an immense crowd was awaiting us. On our arrival the Quakers disembarked, and ranged themselves on either side of us to keep back the crowd. Having explored the country, we visited the largest of the inns and ate a frugal meal. Then we returned on board the boats, which were already illuminated, as it was now night, and amid a great noise of cheering we shaped our course for the Casino de' Vobili at the gates of La Mira, where we purposed spending the night in merry pastimes. But as we passed the house of the Senator Giambattista Corner, we were

surprised to see it all lit up with wax torches at the windows and loggias, and with resin torches at the gates. At this gay spectacle our band struck up, and from the inside of the palace it was answered by an excellent orchestra, sent for by the Senator from Venice. We disembarked, and when the master of the house, surrounded by a great and illustrious company, had made us welcome, we all began to dance, and did not cease till sunrise. But this gentleman's kindness did not stop here, for he courteously invited me and all my friends to dinner that same day. The splendour with which he regaled us may be imagined, but cannot be described. The dessert symbolised the various persons of the masquerade, and the *hors d'œuvres* alluded to the same. It was fated that the fun should go yet further. Among the roasts of the feast were several pheasants, but as the stomach of the guests was already satisfied, the master of the house made signs to the major-domo to reserve them for the morrow. The Senator Marco Gradenigo, who sat next to him at table, exclaimed aloud upon the stinginess of such an order. These words offended Corner, who began to taunt him with frequenting the feasts of his friends, yet never offering so much as a glass of water to another. At this Gradenigo was incensed, for he was famous for his lavish hospitality. He rose and invited the whole company for the morrow, pledging his word that all the dishes put upon the table should either be eaten or never be brought back. He was applauded loudly; Corner retaliated, and so this generous point of honour lasted for ten days, and Corner and Gradenigo entertained us six times in succession."

Open house and free table! Whosoever will, let him enter, let him sit down, take his ease, and stay as long as he thinks good! Often as many as thirty guests arrive, of whose names the host is ignorant. All the assembled parasites of Venice—and that is not a few—fare sumptuously, and pay their footing with jests, songs,

and flattery. "Though it's I that say it," cries one such, in Goldoni's "Grumblers," "I am the salt of the villeggiatura. Would you have dancing? Then I'll dance for you; minuet or furlane, with or without music, with an old hand or a new one; and when I dance, I promise you, they shall so laugh that they shall dislocate their jaws. And, in the matter of singing, I have such a natural gift, that all swear I have had lessons, though I cannot tell sol from fa. I sing like a Fury, all up and down the octaves, bass, tenor, and alto, solo or duet; and for Piazza ditties, there's not a man in Europe with my talent. The table is in a roar when I am at it. I make the most prodigious rhymes; and even the words that will not rhyme must needs rhyme when I bid them. When I have taken a drop, madam, then I am superb. I care not a rush for any man, I speak saucily to all, and I take buffets, blows, and cabbage-stalks all in the best part possible. Why, more than once I have been so besmirched from head to foot that you would have died of laughter to behold me. It is on me that all the tricks are played, 'tis I that make the whole world merry. They have made me catch the eel in the bucket, eat macaroni with my hands tied, swallow a great cake of bran, and the deuce knows what beside—a thousand pranks all played on *me*, madam. And this year, since I shall be with you, I shall show you somewhat of my skill. For your improvement, madam, I have learnt especially a deal of conjuring, with the pea and thimble trick; I have learnt to sever a ribbon and yet leave it whole, to draw a pigeon from a pack of cards. You shall see the yokels gape at me, and cry, 'Oh! what a devil! what a sorcerer!'"

And yet this is not all. 'Tis not enough for the gallery. To these parasites the antics must be added, creatures bred by the provinces, and destined to be thrust back to their dens anon; grinning and crooked forms, who, in the refined eighteenth century, sustain

the rôle of the dwarfs and buffoons of the Renaissance. In the cause of mirth, nothing is deemed unworthy. And from time to time the cafés of the little country towns, the taverns, the farm-houses buried away in the remotest corners, are startled by the sight of merry cavalcades of fine ladies and fine gentlemen, who invade their silence, take possession of their children, monopolise the chairs, fan themselves, laugh, gesticulate, and chase the pigs and poultry. Autumn arrives ; and no one heeds it. The Great Council is summoned ; no one attends. The snow falls in thick flakes ; yet no one stirs. There remains but one Canon of the Church, one hunchbacked woman, one eccentric, and a fellow with a dismal face, "like an execution-warrant." With them the opera is played before the podestà of Gambellara, who falls suddenly in the midst of the performance, with his magisterial platform under him.

Oh, rural joys ! Oh, pastoral delights ! Oh, idylls in white moire ! Sweet colloquies of youth on steps of rosy marble ! Rustic stages, with a curtain of green leaves, with flowers for footlights, and the clouds for a proscenium ! About the theatre the sky clings like silk ; from afar come scents upon the zephyr's wings ; baskets of bouquets hang on the arching boughs ; fountains play ; fireworks shame the stars ; peacocks outspread their tails ; and the sun shines like a hero translated to the gods. And so it is, perpetually.

To be at peace, to shun this turmoil, to speak no more ; above all, to laugh no more ! to stretch out weary limbs beneath the pines, to find rest from the twang of guitars in the simple song of the grasshopper, to forget mankind in nature, to nibble a blade of grass, to count the spots of the ladybird crawling on that blade of grass, and to peep into the cyme, and hearken to the breeze, and commune with the shadow ; who would be clown enough to utter such a prayer ? No one but Count Gasparo Gozzi, it may be, when inviting his friend

Seghezzi to his country house, in a letter of sublime old-fogynood; or, perhaps, the poet Antonio Lamberti, to whom we owe such fine verses on the country in winter-time. But Antonio Lamberti was a poet, and Gasparo Gozzi was another poet—a man well pleased with books so old that the very worms had done with them. But those good citizens of Venice that we write of, *they* have no such wish.

They know not the cloy of pleasure. They know not the surfeit of delight. They may tire of conquering; of enjoying, never. All their store of strength and faculty they spend on their diversions. They rock the swing of Pastime without cease. And, having passed nine months in one unbroken festival, they hasten to the country; not to take rest, not to revive in peace, but to carry that same festival with them. Heroes they are of festival; its martyrs, never.



## CHAPTER IV

### VENETIAN LOVE

IN Venice, that stern Republic, whose story is filled full with manly exploits, in the old days women were of small account.

The only important women were those fair devotees, among whom Louis the Fourteenth found his spies, and those illustrious courtesans with Titian hair, like a veil of fire, whom Aretino taught, whom Veronese painted, and of whom the sixteenth century supplied to the traveller a printed list with prices and addresses. But in the eighteenth century woman is triumphant. She is the point about which love revolves. She leads the dances. She queens it over the whole people "au sang si doux," now softened and unmanned, fawning like Hercules at the feet of Omphale.

The courtesans are sunk to the rank of *filles de joie*. With the march of the century the devotees have seen their power wane, their circle shrink : and now they are no more than silly nuns and she-fanatics, whose view is bounded by the convent walls and the confessional, whose secret joy is in sweets and lapdogs, whose lives are made of mass and sermon, whom the thought of a new preacher robs of sleep. No longer need a woman take the veil, if she would see the world. She need not even be a courtesan. For the *Zentildonne* are as free as air.

Having emerged from the shadow, descended from their high heels and ancient prejudices, the women say and do as they list. All space is full of them. One finds them everywhere : not only "among the cushions of a

balcony," but under the arcades, in the garden, in the casino, in the café. They embellish every scene with little groups, defined and quickened by the outline of a mask, the tip of a shoe or of a fan, the peaks of a three-cornered hat. Their name is Legion. Their skirts rustle on the pavement. They wear tiny three-cornered hats perched roguishly upon one ear. They wear white slippers, huge bustles, fatal beauty spots, dresses of stout silk trimmed with gold braid, whence prying little feet peep out. They draw on garters embroidered in gold letters with a French love-device. Over their heads they fasten that supple *zendaletto* of white lace, which inwreathes the waist, the shoulders, and the smile, heightens or conceals the fire in the dark eye, swiftly discovers a white bosom or a cherry lip, yields to all whims, adds to all graces, magnifies all beauties, and seems to the Countess of Rosenberg to be the very girdle of Venus. Beneath it they are white "as the petals of pale roses." They are bold, merry, garrulous, and sportive as those young ladies of the name of Wider, seven of whom joined hands to pull Mozart from his chair; reckless as that patrician lady, Caterina Bollini, who, at the Carnival of 1756, "stirred by the wild blood of youth and stooping to the frolic," must needs essay her skill upon the tight-rope. In the moonlight, on the Piazza, old Gozzi watches their strange pranks, and Ballarini sees their motley throng pass by "in dainty slippers, neat corsets, and short petticoats."

"Dresden china," the Prince of Denmark used to call them.

They are inspired by all the imps of mischief. Nothing withstands their onset. No scruple holds them back. They respect nothing in the wide world, unless it be the "Poupée de France" in the Merceria. They rummage the thrice holy ark of politics. They peep through the crevices into the Freemasons' Lodge. "No, no!" cries Corallina, in *Le donne curiosè*, "it is not curiosity, 'tis

an overpowering zeal for knowledge." Where is that Venetian skill in keeping secrets, that Addison so extolled, setting it down to the discretion of the nobles in talking with their wives? In these days their wives enjoy all knowledge, as they do all power. They make laws and systems, appoint Censors, plot and plan over their coffee, in their beds, and upon their horses. They wield absolute power; demanding the exile of an unskilful milliner, or the preferment of a friend, who has kept them well posted at their villa with the latest news, to a Professor's chair at Padua. "During the last six years," writes Abbé de Bernis, "the Zentildonne have obtained great influence in affairs." If there is some big lawsuit in the courts there are sure to be four or five women hidden behind the judges' robes. "Nowadays," complains one of Goldoni's clowns, "when a man would ask a boon, he must climb into a woman's favour. One will be sighing to 'em on the right hand while another kneels upon the left, one holds a tray for them, one stoops for their handkerchief, one will be their secretary and one their valet, one helps them from their seats, one plies the scent-bottle, and one the fan. The sex triumphs, and men are fettered slaves."

These girls of Venice are lighter than a feather. They are never still. They have seven spirits in one body. "You may watch a sack of fleas but not a woman," saith the Venetian proverb. The Inquisitor cannot sleep a wink on their account. In vain does the Inquisitor search their papers, confiscate their books, shut up their country houses, confine them to their *palazzi*, command them through their grown-up sons to keep the peace. They muzzle the Inquisitor: they mock his terrors. The sumptuary laws astonish and incense them. "Why, soon they will order us to stay in our own houses, or rather in our kitchens, with the lamp trimmed, patching up skirts and jackets, these new Solons, these Lycurguses." They are dainty, delicate, unabashed, graceful, ravish-

ingly sweet. When they hear the shot of an arquebus they stop their ears. When they are pinched in the crowd, they cry out ; but if some one tickles them, they laugh, out of mere good-humour and goodwill. When a certain inquirer dissected one of their brains he found a pack of cards, a dozen miniatures of a dozen coxcombs, a scrap of Harlequin's cloak, a file of unpaid bills, and a regiment leaving the parade-ground.

Only yesterday, in the youth of that lewd poet Baffo, they were treated, by a barbarous usage, like the enslaved Eastern women ; mewed up in the women's quarters, where suspicion watched and guarded them like sacred relics. It was out of the question then to visit them, to court them, to go in the gondolas with them, or indeed to meet them elsewhere than at church ; and to pinch one of them was a thing to be remembered. They told their beads, they feared the ogre and hobgoblin, they made the sign of the cross a thousand times before they slept. And now that they have learnt better, they wear crosses—but of diamonds—they keep their pious books for curl-papers. Whoever desires their company may have it. It is this easy intercourse which renders a stay in Venice “so agreeable to the foreigner.” With a mask over the forehead, and two or three lovers dangling by them, they escape, vanish, flee away in their gondolas after the play, receive gentlemen in their bedrooms, invite strangers to their game, or airily accost the pink domino, which they have singled out upon the Piazzì. “O mask,” they cry, “by your high mien, surpassing that of our own gentlemen, my friend and I perceive you are a stranger.” Enraptured by their waggish fondness, the Elector Palatine, the Duke of Mecklenburg, Frederick the Fourth, King of Norway, and Maximilian the Second, King of Bavaria, order their miniatures from La Rosalba. And in swift sketches Pietro Longhi reveals their attitudes, their gestures, their airs and graces, all their familiar, coaxing ways.

Truly there is no falsehood in their faces ; no affectation in their speech. They think aloud, and are answered frankly. "Ah!" wrote the romantic poet Cesaroli in his old age to La Renier-Michiel, "had I but known you sooner, what a lovely offspring had been mine." "Little joys," "atoms of the sunlight," the song calls them : for in praise of their sweet brilliance, ever dancing in the limelight of caprice, their native dialect is ever coining new endearments, exquisite, untranslatable diminutives.

Their fancy is like a scurrying white mouse. Their eyes rove, seeking mischief. They hasten lest a moment's jog be lost. On their way they flit into a chapel for Low Mass, culling religious merit, as a sparrow snaps up a crumb by the roadside. They are transient moods of Being, in striped and flowered silk. They are tiny souls, frail and diaphanous as those daughters of the rainbow that the glass-worker of Murano blows from his thin pipe. They are but face and smile ; teasing and trumpery. Such was the gentle Renier-Michiel, whose white dress shone at Rome under a wreath of crimson roses, and whom the Romans called "the little Venetian Venus." Such was the madcap Marina Guerini-Benzoni, all guile and wantonness, who was able ere her death to join the hands of Byron and La Guiccioli. Such was the volatile Cornelia Gritti, who made Baffo reel with ecstasy, and whose supple hips Fregoni sang—

*"Sogno il bel fianco in suo giacer vezzoso."*

The austere Parini was wont to remember with a sigh Cecilia Tron, so lavish of herself. And Ugo Foscolo loved "wise Isabella," "divine Isabella," that daughter of Hellas, now in Venice, whose enchanting portrait Mme. Vigée-Lebrun has left us, and whose salon was the rendezvous of Europe.

No, these ladies are not learned ! "They have scarce a smattering of letters," Abbot Chiari says ; and yet they are so wide-awake that a lover might teach



them the alphabet with a motion of his hand. They write to their gallants as a cook writes. They descant to each other on the details of their dreams, and the pains of their confinements; they complain of the discomfort of corsets and the neglect of servants, "who, when a guest of the house calls for chocolate, as often as not bring nothing at all, or at best some poisonous brew of coffee:" but for all that they are so alert, so full of life; and giddy as the first stroke of matins. They compose, when they are minded to be clever, things so jejune and empty—Gritti's verses, the *Ritratti* of Albrizzi, the *Feste Veneziane* of La Michiel—but yet entirely natural; blending demonic vehemence with a childlike simplicity. They are steeped in soft melancholy all their days. With their ten fingers they have learned but to caress.

They have been shepherdesses in Arcadia. They have been sung by poets, waited on by princes, worshipped by an age. They have gathered to their thoughtless winsome selves a fantastic world of spend-thrifts of the soul. They have framed the fleeting hour in roses, pearls, and carbuncles. They have bestowed upon the echoes of the night their peals of laughter, they have worn out their slippers on the Liston marble, they have charmed a society that charmed the world. And they have said a thousand times, "Hands off, sir; *mani in casa*."

And now, whether they have abandoned all resistance, or whether death has gathered them, the dear little voices are for ever hushed. . . .

"The Venetians may be said to have two souls," wrote La Renier-Michiel, "the one for tears, the other for laughter: mine is for loving, before all things." In this she is like all her countrywomen. Their clock strikes only at the trysting-hour. Each night their boat of dreams puts out for Cythera. And on every page of their history two doves are billing, as on the cards of Manin, the old Doge.

Love ! 'Tis the infant god ; the urchin Eros, naked as a street arab of the Rive ; love in the ancient fashion, as Horace knew it, as the Ionian Greeks conceived it ; keen, tender, rapturous, without cessation, without memory ; wherein the soul gives to the sense her countenance, and smiles serenely, nowise plaguing it with scruple and remorse ; a love that holds nothing romantic, nothing fatal ; that knows no more of the shame that goes before than of the despair that follows after ; for whom the Beyond is the Beyond for ever, for whom Evil never was. Such love does not grow weary ; it takes flight. It does not last ; it recommences. It endures but the space of a kiss. It is the passing influence, the secret whim, the quivering of the veil of Maya, that thrills the flesh of all created beings, the painted web of the enchantress woven for the joy of young desire.

You may hear its weeping in those plaintive *arie di batello*, wafted up from nights of passion, that seize upon the soul until she swoons. You may hear its laughter in those dainty satires—madrigals and lampoons of the Venetian anthology—that have caught the sweetness of dead love, and kept it as an ancient perfume in a phial. You may hear it singing in those winged *canzonette*, grand-daughters of the old *giustiniane*, that float on the canals from mouth to mouth. Those fugitive embraces, those sly kisses, those sudden moods of petulance, those ecstasies of passion, all the phases of its airy genius, are expressed in these light verses. Sylvia and Phillis, Lucieta and Lilla, Nina and Ninetta are the houris of this paradise of lovers ; who sing of their languid grace, of the perilous beaming of black eyes, of "bosoms of alabaster turned upon the lathe." "Lucieta," sings a boatman, "thou art made for kisses." "Mo ria, diane de si mia cocoleta ; 'tis but a quibble to say no !" another answers from the river-bank. "Never maiden lost her cheek, because of one brief

kiss." And there is a song goes thus: "Thou wouldst have men die of rapture looking on thy lovely face, thou wouldst be all grace and beauty . . . and then, forsooth, 'Unhand me, sir'—then, 'Prithee, sir, refrain!'"

In the little gondola, to which the youth has led her, the *blondinetta* falls asleep. She slumbers, leaning on his arm, lulled by the rhythm of the oars, wakes, and falls asleep once more. Beneath a cloud the moon shines faintly. The zephyr stirs the lace upon her breast. He gazes on her, and from so much gazing his heart feels an impulse, a delicious languor, an unspeakable content. But at length, weary of sleep, he stealthily draws near. And then!—"What pleasant things he found to say, what pleasant things he found to do!"

"And Nina, little Nina, she was so lovely in those days, when a little junketing rejoiced her. Her grace was her supreme adornment; Love, Delight, and Laughter sported on her coverlet. Nina, little Nina, thou wast so lovely then! But now the times are changed. Nina is rich, little Nina treads on Persian carpets, and drinks from silver cups. Aye, and a thousand other luxuries. My lady has a country house, and pearls and rubies, and a fat, solemn fellow at the door. Alas! it seems his beetle-brows have driven away the old-time fairies! These frills and furbelows, these furs and baubles, this velvet and embroidery, wherewith you cram your coffers, all this pomp which decks you like a goddess (forgive the words Ninetta!), is not worth a pair of kisses, given in thy early spring."

"I am thinking, Nonola, what Love would do, if Love should see thee: is't not a pretty thought, Nonola? I'll wager he would lose his senses, for a while; then he would say, 'Who is this lady?' This would he say, and then, bold as you please, this mad boy would seek to kiss thee. First thy hand, and then thine arm, then, suddenly the rogue would pout, and gently—oh, so gently!—the rascal would be climbing higher and yet

higher, saying : ' This girl makes Love himself in love ! ' And just as other children, he would give you no more peace ; he would seize an eye, a lip, and *then* . . . who knows ? And thou, being vexed, wouldst handle him unkindly, thou wouldst say to him : ' Be quiet, little boy, be good.' But he, like other children, half in the sulks, half out, would be altogether hidden in thy lovely hair. Talking to thee, weeping to thee, so would he coax and fondle ; till at last, he heard thee say : ' Come hither, scamp, and have thy wish.' "

Such light fancies are imprisoned in the songs of Venice ; even the whole mother-of-pearl landscape, the dawn waking on the Lido, the sea shimmering, the chimneys blazing in the sun, or else the moon, streaking the shades with silver, glancing merrily between the myrtles, painting a second sky upon the sea.

Such a Love as this has power upon the country-women of Giustina. He is not passion, he is grace, and sport, the fruit of lifelong custom, and the dainty spirit of the times. He serves not the goddess Venus, mighty and majestic, but the young lady of the mirror, which La Rosalba conjured. He goes before his votaries, dancing the minuet. 'Twas his deft finger modelled their soft flesh, and pressed it for the dimples ; 'tis he turns up the corners of their lips and the flounces of their skirts ; 'tis he that fills them full of life ; 'tis he that breaks their leisure with rapturous alarms ; 'tis he that peoples the rich heaven of their dreams, and the pictured heaven of their bed's canopy, with those familiar angels that are but Cupids in disguise. Without him they would find no sap in life, no excuse for being in the world at all. They would stand helpless under an arcade. For their flight they need his chariot and his guiding hand, his harness and his exhortation, his wings, his gentle spur. They are nowise ashamed of loving, and of making known their love. They are of a town and country, where love is not weak, childish, and im-

proper, but where it is a thing of course, the common cult of all, the sacred and unchallenged law, whose very mildness calls forth sympathy and commands respect. They are love-adepts indeed. They have looked the devil in the face, and found him not ill-favoured. They are most languorous coquettes, as soft as cooing doves, playful as kittens. They are passionate, and for all their passion still graceful and witty. Some exquisite influence melts them always to consent. They shed tears of delight. They force them from the world. And with these skilful pilots Venice plunges into the sea of pleasure, as she plunged into the sea of fame.

Who can relate the history of this love's hour, when it seems that every gondola carries an adventure, and the black folds of every *felze* fall on an embrace. Whether from indifference or secrecy, the gondoliers have betrayed nothing, out of all the idylls they have sped; they have said nothing of the frolics, escapades, elopements, filing of iron bars, and a thousand and one romances with rope-ladders and false keys, in which they were the faithful servants and accomplices. One had but to whisper, "Voga!" and, having spat in the water, they took the oar in silence, bearing into oblivion the frail, unsteadfast symbol of love's coffin.

Ancilla receives Président de Brosses, disguised as the Venus of Medici. And, dressed as a gentleman, the nun of Murano keeps tryst with Casanova under Il Colleone's statue. Two abbesses fight with daggers for Abbé de Pomponne. Zulietta keeps a brace of pistols on her toilet-table. "Ah!" exclaims Rousseau, "that's a new style of powder-box!" Giustiniana Gussoni, the eighteen-year-old bride of a Mocenigo, flees in a gondola with the young Count de Tassis. In the convent where she is confined, and "to which God never called her," Maria da Riva yields to the Count de Frollay, the French ambassador. Angela Tiepolo, the zentildonna, "small, slender, charming, white as snow,



with two eyes soft and languishing, and two dimples in her cheeks, that were like roses," lures into a whirl of pleasures the young Abbé Lorenzo da Ponte, fresh from the seminary, and "bewitched by her poetical, Italian soul." Opposite his *palazzo*, where he sits at a window scribbling verses, Count Carlo Gozzi, a young officer, espies a newly-married girl who sings at her embroidery. "Her bosom was fresh and full; her arms were plump, her hands were slender; a poppy-coloured ribbon crowned her forehead, and was tied behind her crisp, long hair." He smiles at her, she smiles again; the intrigue ripens, and, some weeks afterwards, one day in June "most marvellously bright," when the lover has escorted to his boat "his little idol, dressed in a pink cloak, with charming negligence," out yonder in some little isle, a "medley of modesty and rapture, sighs and inexpressible delights," puts an end to a virtuous and somewhat tedious Platonism. Brilliant parties, choice banquets, *tête-à-têtes* in the "little houses"; serenades and hours of long waiting in the by-lanes of the city; whispered words behind a fan; sly rustlings beneath the domino—hand gropes for hand, and foot meets foot in silence; here are balls, concerts, feasts of preserved fruits and honeyed wine; rendezvous in the little gardens with their trellis-frames of gold in La Zuecca or San Biagio; three-cornered love-letters; distiches of Horace; rhymes fresh as the lips that made them, and no less harmoniously blending; one dare not venture further into these retreats. Let him proceed, who can without repugnance follow his rude Chloe into the grotto of the nymphs: *Nymphæ faciles risere*. "License, debauchery, profligacy!" say you? There's an ugly crop of words indeed, most surly and discourteous! But an elegy of old Tibullus, a fable of La Fontaine, a pastoral of Boucher, are those such scurvy matters? Do they not gather in the grace of life? Does not a ray stream from them to the soul? O

smiling Arcady ! O land, peopled with kisses ! Bright pictures of the poet of Tenodos limned on the foaming cup of spring ! Crime dwindles to a frolic, sin is whittled to a jest ! Corruption itself seems frank and natural. These simple beings think they do no harm in giving others pleasure and sharing it with them. They are true to nature, because they have never passed beyond her portal. They date from Eden, from the sweet hour of the serpent's visit. They even thank God for the blessings they enjoy. So did that Marina Benzon, who rendered thanks to Our Lady for having vouchsafed her Beppo to her, and so did Casanova and his two little friends, Manette and Marton, the two nieces of Mme. Orio, who, after the liveliest gambols in the world, felt the need of lifting up their hearts to Heaven in praise and thanksgiving.

"Caro ti !" Caterina Corner used to say to her friend, Piero Pesaro. And nothing on earth, not absence, exile, mourning, not even the ruin of his country, vanquished and reviled by the invader, could cause the outlaw to forget the sweetness of that fond caress, the modulation of that voice. That little phrase of love, all lips have uttered it ; and they have uttered it with the same sweet inflection. Whencesoever they may come, whatsoever they may be, daughters of chance or of the Golden Book, dancing-girls or nuns, *zentildonne* or courtesans, they are all sisters by virtue of their love. Moved by the same god, they conceive the same desire. Yielding to the same free impulse, they give to the hour the same mellow tint of tender sensuality and exquisite voluptuous joy. They are the joint handiwork of fairies and of angels. They have all one story and one soul. The same sentiment aroused by Zulietta in Jean-Jacques makes of a rope-walker the spouse of a Renier, of a common prostitute the wife of a Marcello, of a coachman's daughter the wife of a Venier and the mistress of a Pepoli.

"I found her," Jean-Jacques writes, "*in restito di confidenza*," "in a '*déshabillé plus que galant*.' . . . I need but say that her ruffles and her stomacher were trimmed with silk thread, garnished with pink tassels. . . . I had no conception of the pleasures that awaited me. . . . Seek not to imagine the charms and graces of that Circe ; you would not come nigh the truth ; the novices of the convent are less fresh, the beauties of the seraglio less gamesome, the houris of Paradise are less enticing. Never was such sweet fruition given to the sense and heart of mortal man ! . . ."

Morals have no business here. The prude covers her face and goes her way. She leaves the others to their freedom. And from behind many a well-shut door ascends their mischievous laughter.

And every lady has her cisisseo. . . .

Scene : Donna Claudia's house. A corner of a drawing-room, among gilded brackets and shelves of lapis-lazuli. Donna Claudia, who has just risen, enters. Finding it empty, she finds herself alone. She feels dull. She yawns and stretches herself. Bored to death, she calls her valet.

"Balestra!—Illustrissima!—Bring me that table.—Yes, Illustrissima. Does her ladyship require anything else?—No. . . . My visitors are late this morning. . . . Balestra!—Illustrissima!—Have you seen Don Alonso?—No, Illustrissima.—That is all I wished to know. . . . That cavalier neglects his duties. . . . He must be growing cold. . . . He comes no longer to his chocolate punctually every morning. . . . Balestra!—Illustrissima?—Give me a chair.—Yes, madam.—It cannot be my husband has not paid his usual homage to his lady. . . . What are you doing, standing up there like a lamp-post?—I was waiting for your ladyship's orders.—When I want you, I shall call you.—Very well.—I cannot bear to be alone. . . . Balestra! Balestra!—I am here, Illustrissima.—Why don't you answer, blockhead?—I thought

your ladyship saw me. . . . (Plague take her!)—When did my husband go out?—At nine o'clock.—Did he say anything to you?—Nothing.—You may go. That is all I wished to know.—I am going, Illustrissima.—Since nobody is coming, I shall pay a visit to Donna Virginia. . . . Balestra!—Illustrissima!—Tell them to put the horses to.—Yes, Illustrissima.—But drive without a gentleman to accompany me! 'Twould be most improper. . . . Balestra!—Illustrissima!—I require nothing.—Your ladyship requires nothing?—No.—Your ladyship will not require the carriage?—No, I tell you. . . . Devil take the fellow (Oh! the mad creature!). Really this Alonso is unpardonable. If he persists in his neglect, I shall take the Cavalier Asdrubal to wait upon me.—Illustrissima!—The devil take you! I did not call you.—A visitor!—Who?—Don Alonso desires to pay his respects to your ladyship.—Idiot! The *cavaliere sirvente* has no need to be announced."

Look well upon this Don Alonso, as he enters, bows, kisses his lady's hand, and playing with his watch-chain, settles himself smiling on the edge of an arm-chair. He is a curious character. Adorned, bedizened, smart as a tailor's dummy is this man, made up, as Ugo Foscolo says, entirely of negatives; being neither lover, friend, nor valet, and yet partaking of the functions of all three. Don Alonso is the complaisant acolyte, the companion indispensable to the comfort, pleasure, and amusement of every self-respecting woman. He is one of the most familiar figures in eighteenth-century Venice. He is the *cicisbeo* or *cavaliere sirvente*.

"'Tis an opinion commonly received in Italy," wrote Carlo Gazzi to his friend Innocenzo Massimi, "that husbands know not how to love." And he wrote the truth. No husband understands those little courtesies and delicate attentions that a woman's happiness continually demands. Moreover, if he understood them, he would still be hindered from performing them, first

because he exists for his own sake, and has business of his own—it may be ladies to attend on; and secondly, because it is supremely ludicrous, woefully bourgeois, and the quintessence of vulgarity to be perpetually dangling at one's wife's petticoats.

Accordingly the *cicisbeo* takes his place. And while her husband is the master appointed by the lady's father, her *cicisbeo* is the friend of her own choice. Often he is secured to her by contract on the same footing as her doctor or confessor.

Towards the lady, who has marked him for her own, the *cicisbeo* discharges all those little duties which are at the same time delightful privileges.

The *cicisbeo* is with her in her goings out and comings in; he is like a shadow at her side; he supports her with his arm in walking, assists her with his hand in mounting or alighting, carries her gloves, her handkerchief, her cloak, her sunshade, her *scaldino*, and her poodle; in church, 'tis he who presents the holy water for her fingers, and receives the prayer-book from her hands; in the porch of the *palazzo*, at the barred gate of the villa, 'tis he that calls the boatman or the staffier; 'tis he conducts her everywhere; he walks or rides with her, and takes her to the theatre, the café, the receptions, and the gaming-tables. If she is playing *faro*, and has lost her last sequin, behold his purse is ready; if, in a round of visits, she has left her cards behind, he has his case full, with her name engraved upon them; if any one dare be disrespectful to her, in company or in the street, he must teach the churl his manners. To the *cicisbeo* belongs the delicate task of protecting the woman, who being married must needs be forsaken, of surrounding her with flattery and yet giving her good counsel, of defending her against others and against herself, of driving the flies from her presence, dispelling the cares from her mind, keeping her in good humour, and entertaining her with stories.



In return for his so punctual service, the *cicisbeo* enjoys most notable prerogatives. The *cicisbeo* visits her when she is abed or newly risen, at her toilet, in her morning-gown. He receives all her confidences and knows all her secrets. For him nothing is hidden that concerns the adored being ; she reveals all to a friend so faithful, trusts all with him, and shows him all, even the inmost mazes of her soul ; on him, who brings her the first ray of sunlight, is her first look bestowed ; for him, who ushers in the first occurrence of the day, is her first smile destined ; she belongs to him more than to her husband, to him more than to her lover. He abounds in tact and reticence. He hunts for the pin to fasten her neckerchief, hands her the mirror when she would dress her hair, hands brush and scent-bottle, manicure-set, hare's foot, powder-box, and powder-puff. Familiar as a lady's-maid with clasps and buttons, he acts upon a nod or gesture. He moistens the tip of his finger, seizes a beauty-spot, and plants it on the place appropriate ; he knows where to put " the man-slayer," " the coquette," the saucy, the passionate, the rakish, the majestic beauty-spots—the last being set in the middle of the forehead. While the waiting-maid is tightening the silk laces of the corset, he presses in the waist with both his hands, draws back the rebellious curl, swells out the ribbon on the throat, kneels down upon one knee and receives upon the other the pretty and impatient shoe, whose shoe-strings are undone. He fastens up her garter, settles her brocade skirt with a few taps of his hand, passes his finger beneath her bodice to thrust down the fold of her chemise. Should the husband intervene, while they are thus busy, it is not for the husband to be angry ; the husband would not be such a sovereign fool as to seem jealous ; the husband knows what a blunder it would be to take offence ; on the contrary, he is overjoyed to see that a gentleman performs those duties to his lady, which he

himself performs to others; with the most winning modesty he escapes upon the slightest pretext, leaving a fair field for the *cicisbeo*. The *cicisbeo* takes advantage of it. The *cicisbeo* is entitled to those little privileges, which are as half-surrenders, and which are perhaps sweeter, and without doubt more lasting, than a complete surrender. He asks nothing more. 'Twould be ungracious in him to persist. He will not do so, if he is well bred. The *cicisbeo* is essentially a man of honour.

An intimacy of this sort, born of the leisure of life and the enfeebling of the senses, implies at once poetic feeling and extreme voluptuousness. More fond than friendship, less commonplace than love, it is a refined variety of *amitié amoureuse*. 'Tis a degree superior to love; a polite amendment of the instincts. For if the *cicisbeo* and his lady keep their limits, it is that they may the better indulge a rarified passion; they respect each other, not as in duty bound, but from excess of courtesy;—playing with fire, dancing upon the rope, and glorying in their giddy exultation, without owning, or even without knowing what they feel within their hearts, that sweet thrill of desire, which vanishes when once desire is satisfied, and which at Venice of all places is a rare and costly thing. By yielding to the obvious temptation, they would waste and spoil their precious intimacy; they would have slain with their own hands a priceless joy, crushed out the infinite mystery that lurks behind the last resistance. When the opera palls upon them, they would find no poignant pleasure in hailing a gondola at midnight, reaching the mainland in an hour, riding a stage or two in a post-chaise, breakfasting at random in some village inn, and returning in time for the first mass.

They would have no more delicate confessions, no more secrets to reveal, no more sweet liberties to take, no more enticing obstacles to overcome. They would taste no more the savour of an attachment, which

makes the least familiarity much prized and long remembered.

“Persuade me that pigs fly,” exclaimed the Milanese lawyer, Costantini, “but you shall never persuade me that two persons, of opposite sexes and both young and healthy, can be so constantly together all these years, without conceiving a certain weakness for each other.” But Costantini was a man of coarse fibre and robust, who understood not the charm of the half-tints. And besides, even if he were right in saying that “the fire cannot approach the straw without kindling it,” that conflagration would prove nothing. On the ruins of that dead sentiment a new servitude would blossom.

Accordingly, in Venice every woman has her *cicisbeo*. Even the shop-girl, even the *coiffeuse*, if Abbé Chiari is to be believed. They had rather be without bread than without their cavalier; and if they are ladies of rank they have two or three. Perhaps it is the presence of this friend that gives them such assurance. Without him they would be less light-hearted, they would wear their shoes out less. For we read in the *Diario Veneto* that one of them, after two months of marriage, to the great astonishment of her relations, and especially of her husband, “wore out seven pairs of shoes and two pairs of boots, and that without having been to a single ball, or even to the country.”

## CHAPTER V

### MEN OF LETTERS. GASPARO GOZZI

ABOUT the streets, books were sold by weight, like walnuts and apples. Venice was a city of printers, of literary cafés, and of book-shops; a region where newspaper-sellers cry all day, where sonnets flutter about in the wind, where rolls of manuscript appear from coat-tails, where men of letters abound, of every fur and feather:—encyclopædists, pamphleteers, novelists, lexicographers, and miscellaneous writers; posy-makers for fans and almanacks; laureates of the regatta; compilers and glossologists; and those universal intelligences which have ideas about the inhabitants of Paraguay, are interested in the prism which the Pope has given to the Academy of Padua, have their private opinion upon Agostino Paradisi's translation of Pope, and rise even to drawing a parallel between the *Œdipus* of Sophocles and the *Ulisse* of Lazzarini; and worry over such questions as "whether the moon has an atmosphere?" There are, besides, country wits, purists in speech, smacking of the soil, whose shoes have lost their polish from the morning walk in wet grass.

Sometimes they have all the graces of high life, like that Abbé Conti, who discovered at Paris that a man of letters may be also a man of the world, or like Count Algarotti, who preferred the conversation of the ladies of his own age to that of the fair women of the Trecento. In other cases they are fiercely attached to tradition. "Remember," once wrote Abbé Forcellini to his brother, a young schoolmaster, "that there exists no solid

literature without Greek." Or again, they hold the scales even; at Padua, the Ossianic poet Melchior Cesarotti used to work by the side of his elderly lady, while she knitted at the end of the table; now and then she would look up from her stocking, and peer at his writing over her spectacles. However that may be, everybody regularly quotes Latin, French, English, and even Spanish. These pupils of the Jesuits are supple and flexible; they bend themselves to the most various kinds of writing, as they obey the most opposite necessities. Francesco Grisellini was a journalist, a historian, a playwright, an artist, an agriculturist, all in one. Giuseppe-Maria Foppa, a man of extraordinary versatility, was, on the top of everything else, "a jurist and a husband." The Abbé Pietro Chiari bequeathed to posterity letters, dialogues, epithalamia, tragi-comedies, plays for the stage and plays for the drawing-room, discourses on ethics and politics, Italian and Latin, prose and verse, hexameters and hendecasyllables, stories with themes Roman, Venetian, French, Muscovite, Turkish, German, Chinese. The twelve volumes of his "*Trattenimenti dello spirito umano sopra le cose del mondo passato, presenti e possibili ad avvenire*" claim to give a general idea, astronomical, geographical, historical, philosophical, and critical, of our celestial and terraqueous globe. In the first volume alone, you get a voyage through the planets and an ascent in a basket; you perceive smells and colours by touch; there is a queen so tiny that she comes out of a pocket, dolphins harnessed to galleys, floating islands, giants who are members of academies, and the secretary of a learned society who is drowning in a glass of water when the author extracts him with his finger.

Even the spies are wits. Pedrini, the spy, reports of the Spanish Ambassador, "A curious head, an excellent heart; a straightforward friend, a feeble enemy; sometimes inconsistent with himself as the result of his



dissipation ; a man of honour as well as a generous and noble character ; capable of a grudge, but above resentment ; a firm friend to us ; steadfast even when he has to complain of the insolence of the *sbirri*, which he protests he has not deserved ; popular in his philosophy ; and, though often absent-minded, more observant than one thinks ; more of a companion than of a husband to his wife, who is a charming person, but of rather limited intelligence . . . such is the Cavaliere de Las Casas."

To sketch a comedy off-hand ; to improvise the libretto of an opera ; to compose a novel inscribed (for purposes of sale) "Translated from the French" ; to make actual translations from French, English and all languages ; to address a series of Moral Letters to a lady (who is always a Person of Quality) ; all this is a mere nothing. At the end of his tether, a man takes it into his head to be a genius ; the man without an occupation promptly becomes an author. One is born a poet. "My friends and my family are my witness," writes Antonio Longo in his memoirs, "that from my earliest years, when overcome with fever, I have been able to speak only in verse." Everybody is a poet, from the women downwards ; the women appear as "magpies of Helicon." "Quacks, ballad-singers, buffoons, carpenters, printers, gondoliers, porters, in fact everybody nowadays plays the poet." "The very grasshoppers are put out, deafened, tormented, to do honour to a bride." A deluge of sonnets on every doctor's degree ; tempests of canzoni composed for nuns, for churchmen, even for undertakers ; a full peal of verse for every stage-drollery, for the arms and legs of each ballerina who excels in leaping like a young colt ; sheets of rhymes passed from hand to hand, or pasted up in the Merceria ; piles of novels, waggon-loads of plays, streams of Critical and Philosophical Letters, a rout of all the "mighty deeds of the inkpot." You get

what you can by it—a bit of bread, and your coffee, and sometimes a salad. Translating is paid from three to four lire the sheet ; three sequins for the skeleton of a comedy ; thirty sequins for a comedy ; forty for a tragedy. At the rate of twelve lire the sheet, Carlo Gozzi reckons that a cobbler gets more for a stitch than a poet for a line. You rub along by writing hard ; also by the dedication, although a nobleman's patronage is worth very little. Men of letters become tutors in families, archivists in big houses, librarians to great men, secretaries, factotums, or parasites ; sometimes, like Giuseppe-Maria Foppa, they paint *Agnus-Dei* for pilgrims to the Holy Land ; sometimes they die of hunger like Domenico Lalli, who “ was born a rich man, and died a poet.” Alas ! when wit runs about the streets, wits may have to go with holes in their stockings.

There are some wits who live in the drawing-room, and others who nest in the garret. Some who wear the cassock, and others the scarlet robe. Some who trail a threadbare cloak, and others who have their own gondola. And there are wits who have never read the ancients, for the very simple reason that the ancients have never read the moderns, and others whose staple food is the pith, the substance, and the elegance of the classics.

One afternoon in 1747 some of the latter sort, out for a stroll at Castello, happened to go into the Convent of S. Domenico, where an Academy of monks was held. They listened with amusement to a little priest, “ with the tiny voice of a mosquito, and the tiny hands of a spider,” rendering a most inept canzone. A few days later they come on him again, crouching under a roof-beam like a bat. They ask (as a favour) to know if he is positively himself the author of the wonderful composition they heard. They uncover their heads, exclaim aloud, clasp their hands and raise them to heaven, and beseech him in chorus to be their master and their prince,

to put himself at the head of their society, to lend it the radiance of his genius, and to accept the title of *Arcigranellone*. Thus arose the bright and gay little Academy of the Granelleschi, which, sprung from a young men's jest, lived several years, met here and there, now in one man's house now in another's, in a café, in a garden, in a courtyard, numbered some excellent wits among its members, had its history with its serious historians, published its proceedings, and was unfailingly visited by distinguished foreigners passing through Venice.

In this society much amusement is derived from Giuseppe Sachellari, the *Arcigranellone*. A medallion weighing quite a pound is fastened round his neck. His head is crowned with a garland of radish, lettuce, beet-root, and greengages. An arm-chair is placed on a table, and he is induced to perch on it by the assurance that it is really the chair of Bembo. He is granted the rare and singular privilege of drinking boiling tea in summer and swallowing iced sherbet in winter. He is compelled to answer all questions, to improvise sonnets, to sing ditties, to contend in his shirt-sleeves with a fencing-master who pinks him all over. He is crowned Poet to the deafening accompaniment of wooden trumpets. He has to pass an examination for his Doctorate, and at the first attempt he is plucked. And the *Arcigranellone* struts about wearing nosegays in his hat, and amulets on his coat, demanding an audience of the Doge Pietro Grimani in order to show him his Encomium in verse bound with gold ribbons, offering his friendship and patronage to the Studio of Padua, appointing as honorary Granelleschi the Grand Turk, the King of Prussia, and the Duke of Ratisbon; subsequently, on reflecting that the two first-named are not Catholics, depriving them of their patents; while the other members comment on Dante, recite lively prose and graceful verse, and claim to go back to the sober and pure example of the good

literature of old. They ridicule the turgid style of the day, and the pedantry of academies. They assume the most burlesque names, as others assume the most graceful. By profession they are patricians, abbés, writers, lawyers, teachers of botany: Giuseppe and Daniele Farsetti, Giovanni Marsili, Gasparo Patriarchi, Natale dalle Laste, Carlo Gozzi, Gasparo Gozzi.

There are men of letters who bring together the *Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia* in thirty-nine octavo volumes; others, like Apostolo Zeno, who bear famous names; others, like Antonio Piazza, names that are unknown; others, like the Abbé Sforza, whose modesty makes them refuse the Cardinal's hat; others, like Giacomo Morelli, who discover a speech of Aristides; others, like Gasparo Patriarchi, who compose a dictionary; others, like the economist Gianmaria Ortes, who "with a touch of the Quaker about them," walk about Florence with a servant holding a parasol.

The type of all these personages, who fill the green-room and the café, keep the newspapers and presses at work, and people the bookshop or the drawing-room, is Gasparo Gozzi.

Tall and bony; so dried up that if you sliced his carcass you could cork bottles with the bits; looking, if we can take his own account of himself, like a toad in the sunlight impaled on a stick; afflicted sometimes with melancholy, sometimes with pains in the stomach; wrapped in a long mantle, which might have been Elijah's, and subsequently S. Martin's; contenting himself, for that matter, with clothes out of fashion, and a home-made Venetian peruke; a head full of whims; silent, monosyllabic, a sworn enemy to ceremonial, not from boorishness, but simply from inexperience; absent-minded, far away; his head in the clouds, anywhere, needing to be whistled back to earth; perpetually stooping over his books; never laughing out loud, but

with a quiet internal laughter which tickled him silently, and kept him in a good temper ; such was Count Gasparo Gozzi, who was born at Venice on December 4, 1713, and died at Padua on December 26, 1786.

His father sprang from the ancient nobility of the Bergamo country. His mother, Angela Tiepolo, was a patrician of the Republic. His wife, called Luisa Bergalli in this world, and Irminda Partenide in Arcady, was a poetess, and a daughter of a cobbler from Piedmont. He was a little over twenty when he met her ; she was ten years older ; and, " from absence of mind," he had married her, after dedicating to her a Petrarchan canzoniere in which he called her an amorous lily ; in grateful remembrance of which, the amorous lily had presented him yearly with a healthy child.

Almost the whole household write verses—the paralytic father, the indolent mother, the nine brothers and sisters of Gasparo, and Gasparo himself. " This house," said Beatrice in Goldoni's *Poeta Fanatico*, " is turned upside down by poetry ; the master a poet, the serving-man a poet, the daughter a poetess, nobody doing his duty, and I have to think of everything ; this morning, so far as I can see, we shall get nothing to eat." Only in this case—in the house of Gasparo Gozzi the poet—there was no Beatrice to think of everything.

They had been rich once, and in those days they had servants, clerical tutors, packs of hounds, a hunting equipage, and a theatre. Now they have fallen into insolvency, thanks not only to the " Pindaric economy of Irminda," but even before that to the aristocratic indolence of the mother, and the disposition of the father, whose solitary accomplishment in this world was the art of following his own bent. They live headlong, as well as they may, upon shifts and fancies, generally at their country house of Vicinale, for reasons of economy, in the winter at Venice in their palazzo San Cassiano, " the Home for Poets." Think of the dilapidated old



palazzo rising out of the unclean water, with its doors hanging by their hinges, its floor falling in, and the cobwebs trailing from the rafters! Screaming, quarrelling children, a scene breaking out at every turn. And everywhere ink-stains! Always some scheme for an article, a play, or a novel to be drafted, or for some prospective lawsuit. The tables are covered with a mixture of summonses and sonnets, both alike nibbled by the mice. Plenty of laughter, none the less—when they return from the country, for instance, looking like a company of mummers. A strange crowd coming and going on the stairs, where bailiffs, money-lenders, lawyers, broken-down playwrights, old ladies with baskets, persons with ideas, and starveling wits, shoulder each other. Everybody is looking for a rhyme; Irminda writes with a wrapper over her, and her husband's wig on her head to protect her from the cold; the father dozes; the mother devotes her attention to maintaining a dignified bearing; two portraits of ancestors, a Titian and a Tintoret, dream of the past in their frames of faded gilt. And when they are at their wits'-end for supplies, unforeseen expedients are suggested, as, to take over the management of the S. Angelo theatre, the performers to be enlisted from among the maid-servants, washerwomen, and hair-dressers of the neighbourhood, the orchestra to consist of street-musicians; or again, to take a paying guest who has fine furniture, and sell their own; the result being day-long squabbles with the paying guest, who proceeds to remove from the house with her furniture, leaving nothing for the inmates to sit on. When the father dies, the family hold a conclave on straw-bottomed chairs with holes in the seat, and for the consolation of the weeping household Irminda protests that she never in her life saw such a beautiful corpse.

In the midst of this confusion, Gasparo Gozzi is at work. Poor man! with the nature of a grasshopper

feasting on song and dewdrops ; adoring the divine calm of lying in bed—adoring idleness, which alone gave life to his intelligence ; he was condemned by fate to the lot of a galley-slave—penal servitude for life. He would fain have let his spirit fly unconfined in space—and like the swallow he must needs flit about the nest to gather food for his young. He was fundamentally unpractical ; unable to use his arms and legs ; would have liked somebody to button his clothes for him, and tie up his shoes ; and his head, like his correspondence, was filled with disputes, lawsuits, actions, and questions of bushels and casks.

His salvation was poetry—originally his amusement, eventually his livelihood ; which supplied him with winged fancies to carry him far away from the strife of to-day. What matter the cries, or the squabbles, or the lizards, or the dust, or the paying guest ? What matters Irminda Partenide, “ more litigious than the Comtesse de Pimbêche ” ? In his heart an ineffable nightingale sings. Green meadows stretch before his eyes. Flocks of sheep browse on the green grass, and his mind spins their wool into thread. Maidens smile under flowering arcades. Palaces lift their turquoise domes into the morning air. The poet in him is happy. By his own account, this poor squire has nothing left of all his property—fields, woods, vines—but the sand in his hour-glass. No man more skilled than he to plant it with his dreams.

For he writes. A room under the leads, opening its attic-window on to the leafage ; a little lamp shining in the night ; a few good books ; some ink ; a goose-quill ; and he writes. He writes from morn till eve ; and in the evening he rubs the sleep away from his eyes, and writes on and on. And, having spent the day in writing, he has the customary failing of being unable to close his eyes without opening a book in bed. He writes everything, about everything, for everything ; for schools,

for theatres, for newspapers, for the weddings of nobles, for the ceremonies of the Republic, for the Councils of State ; seldom, alas, for himself. Verse amorous, verse comic, verse satirical ; sprightly prose ; official statements ; eloquent discourses ; plays for the stage and the closet ; rough drafts of comedies ; hundreds of tales, and an infinite number of translations from Greek, Latin, French, English, German. "Continual writing will be my part," he confesses, "till the fall of the curtain." Pen and inkpot are his brothers, of the same litter as himself. He is *par excellence* a miscellaneous writer, turning himself to every business, never refusing a piece of work ; though he never produced "one of those great and solid works of sovereign importance" which alone bring fame to their author. The type of his mind is the fugitive piece. The medium of his talent is the loose sheet. If he is a miscellaneous writer, it is in journalist fashion. And in this land of newspapers, his prospects of fame are deposited, and the best of his produce garnered, in three papers—the *Gazzetta Veneta*, the *Mondo Morale*, and the *Osservatore*.

You should read these periodicals, whose winged sheets once went the round of the clubs, the cafés, and the little streets each nimbly spanned by its bridge. You find in them samples of every product of his craft, together with every aspect of contemporary Venetian life :—the account of the cure of a polypus, alongside of a dainty fable ; a recipe for *rosoglio*, with a fragment translated from Basil ; a new process for grafting, with an Oriental tale, or a Spanish interlude, or a character-sketch. Official occurrences, such as the inauguration of the church of the Pietà, or the installation of Tommaso Querini as Procurator, are recorded just as much as the latest comedy of Goldoni ; the recent publication of Gessner or Marivaux, just as much as the landlady's portrait displayed by Alessandro Longhi in the Merceria. A teacher of arithmetic offers his services :—address care

of the cheesemonger at the S. Apostoli Bridge. A young widow, of a citizen stock, living with Dame Zanetta Stefani at the Porto di Lotto, No. 1, S. Bartolommeo, consents to open negotiations with the advertiser who desires to marry. A good woman of S. Termita relates the singular history of her hen, which, being two and a half years old, and having laid no eggs for a year, had become so light that it seemed made of feather. And there are in detail the local annals: the story of the modern philosopher, who, having partaken of soup, undresses on the Piazzetta, and, clothed only in his shirt, stretches himself on his other apparel, and sleeps till daybreak with the utmost relish; the story of the society of thirty persons, who set out their table on the Riva de' Schiavoni, toast the passers-by, and invite any one to drink; the story of the two thieves, who stop a traveller by night, and ask him why he is making for Castello wrapped in a cloak. "For two reasons," he replies, "one because it is cold, the other because the cloak belongs to me." "As for the first," replied the thieves, "there is no ground for disputing it; it is cold. But as for the cloak being yours, that, by your leave, is no reason in law, and it belongs to us." Then there are dreams, and theories, and fragments of conversation picked up in passing; like that between a little boy and his father one evening on the Rialto. The boy asks his father, "What are the stars?" "My boy, the stars are stars—things that shine as you see." "Then I suppose they are candles?" continues the boy. "Exactly," says the father; "candles, that is just what they are." "Tallow or wax?" from the child. "Oh! tallow in heaven? no, no; wax, wax," says the father, to get himself out of his difficulty.

There is the daily trivial chronicle of the café, the drawing-room, and the street; the dispute which occurred at a party, between several blue-stockings and their cavaliers, about the colours green and red; and a

shower of letters from subscribers ; and protests in bulk ; and contradictory pieces of intelligence, and inquiries made by people ; and Whether men of science are capable of love affairs ; and What are the characteristics of Petrarchan poetry ; and Why painters and poets always represent Love as a boy ; and Whether Alexander the Great was really valiant.

Here is all Venice—its round of frivolity, its family life, its kindly domesticity, its graceful dissipation. And here above all is Gasparo Gozzi.

He is brimful of imagination. A thousand phantoms of poetry and grace haunt his spirit ; a thousand comic suggestions call forth his genius for extravagance. Idiotic dreams, castles in the air, old wives' tales ; moralities, allegories, arguments ; dialogues of this world, and the next world, and gods, and animals—who can tell the contents of this fantastic imagination with its diamond-facets ? Ulysses discourses with a bat, and Homer defends his poems against the irreverence of a needlewoman. The bookseller Colombani converses in his shop with two Carnival Masks. Aristophanes and Mantegna enter upon a discussion. The Berretta, the Spider, and the Gout are the characters of a fable ; the Mosquito and the Firefly of another. The Praise of Idleness alternates with the Praise of Cafés or of Almanacks. The Venetian shop-signs amuse him—dedications to the Benediction, to Magnanimity, to the Moral Virtues, to Brotherly Love, to Charity to one's Neighbour.

When he sees the quack-doctors obstructing the streets, he asks himself whether man is ever anything but a seller of balsam, a retailer of secrets. And at Carnival-time it occurs to him that all these ceremonies, and compliments, and bows, and hats-off, and hand-shakings, and kissings, and steppings to the right rather than to the left, and sittings in one place rather than in another—that all these may well be masquerades like the rest.



One day, while he is absorbed in composing verses by the bank of a stream, a country maiden bursts out laughing at him behind his back. Another time, he establishes with full evidence the point that, whereas our feet were given us to walk with, we use them to dance ; and that, whereas our hands were given us to work the ground, we use them for writing. He has a vision of a witless creature, whose brain is fed from day to day like his stomach, so that things go in by his ears in the morning, and come out in the evening at the tip of his tongue, and he remains perpetually empty.

He listens to the lamentations of a young widow, who with floods of tears orders a costume from her tailor without forgetting the smallest detail of ornament. He takes note of the chatter of a silly little woman with a rage for the great world. He describes the uproar of a conversation in good society. Something of gentle irony beams in his eyes ; some old fond peasant-song echoes in his heart. There is always a grain of salt in his cooking-pot. He sketches a profile, outlines small scenes, conjures up tiny landscapes, paints a lively genre-picture, and gives himself up to the caprices of a wandering and playful humour, everything that is graceful and light. For instance :—

“ Alcippus wishes and does not wish. When he has anything to do, he says from a distance, ‘ I will do it.’ The time comes near, and his arms fall useless at his side : he is made of cotton-wool, when he is within call of fatigue. Business teases him ; he would lose his wits were he to read any good book. Let us put him to bed ; that is where he spends his life. If he has the least little employment, a moment seems hours to him : it is only in his amusements that hours seem moments. Time always runs away from him ; he never knows what he has done with it ; he lets it flow by like water under a bridge. Alcippus, what did you do this morning ? He can’t say. He lived without knowing he

was living. He stayed in bed as late as he could ; he dressed slowly ; he talked to the first person he met, though he has forgotten what he talked of ; he went the rounds of his room : the dinner-hour came, it passed like the morning, and all his life will pass like this day."

"Quintilia and Ricciardo visit an invalid. The instant they come in, they inquire about his condition. Hearing that he is at the last gasp, they frown and look melancholy. Both are sitting opposite a mirror. Quintilia now and then asks what the doctors say, and what medicines are being used ; she sighs, twists her neck, shrugs her shoulders, but, without taking her eyes off the mirror, she puts her hand, as though by chance, to a flower which adorns her dress, and sets it straight. Ricciardo pities the family, protests his friendship, puts on a sorrowful tone of voice, but without seeming to know it he corrects his attitudes by the mirror. The doctor comes in. The family escort him into the sick-room. Quintilia and Ricciardo cannot bear the sight. They stay by themselves, and she remembers a fan she has forgotten to call for at the shop, and he assures her that if they make haste the shop will not be shut. How long will the doctor stay in the bedroom ? They begin to be afraid they will be too late. They worry and fidget. 'Come along !' says Ricciardo. 'No,' she replies, 'decency forbids.' The family come out with tears in their eyes. The doctor gives his opinion. Scarcely has he ended when, with a 'Heaven console you !' Ricciardo and Quintilia rush off after the fan, conversing about how long they take about everything in that house !"

"A few months ago, Geva, the little peasant-girl, was cheerful and in good spirits. She used to come to the door in the morning with a song on her lips. She would sing all day long. At the humble board of the household, she made all the company laugh. Pretty by nature, she cared little for well-dressed hair ; a chance

blossom was finery enough for her. Why has she now become melancholy and silent? She pays great attention to her person; she chooses her flowers, putting them two or three times to her temples, her brow, and her bosom, and then, scarcely satisfied, pinning them in. At Cecco's approach, Geva blushes and grows pale at the same time. Short and quick breaths stir beneath her dress. She looks boldly at others, but takes no notice of him; she answers everything he says with a touch of displeasure. When he goes, her eyes, which lit up at his coming, grow dull again. She never asks where he is going. She raises her eyes if she is asked. When they talk of love, she will not listen; she begins to sigh by stealth; question her about her sighs, and she gives deceitful reasons for them, and looks angry if they are not believed. Cecco, there is one who loves you from the heart!"

There is much polish in his sprightly humour, much poetry in his vivacity. He has refined the madcap spirit of Venetian comic writing by the touch of the old authors of Athens and Florence, or the masters of irony in other lands. He has been aided in forming his style by Aristophanes and Lucian, by Addison and La Bruyère. He has read much, thought more than most, and laboured at length "with rounded spine." If he showed his palms, you would see callosities such as an honest labourer bears. Writing the prettiest of Latin, having fluttered from book to book like the bee from flower to flower, and having made knowledge "the guiding lantern of his mind," he has by the way fathomed that "inward life" from which his superficial age turns away. There is Dante, his daily companion; Dante, whom he, long before Monti, revived in Italy; whom he defended against the Jesuit Bettinelli in a prose work of great integrity and truth; and there is the Country, where he went to hear the poets sing among the grasshoppers; the Country for which he keeps such a charming instinct,

and in which one can call up his figure under autumn leafage in a russet cloak. These two, Dante and the Country, have for all time given a distinctive tone to his mind.

He has self-respect, and the respect of his art ; and also of his language, which he would have clear and natural, drawn from the living springs of common speech, adorned, like a peasant-girl, with the flowers from her meadows, not covered with powder, jewels, and trinkets. His nature—from a rigorously Italian stock, piously attached to tradition, devoted to the Crusca, classic like an ancient text, fallen a little way behind on the roads of the past—has not been corrupted by the cosmopolitanism which in eighteenth-century Italy tyrannised over ideas as well as style. He is one of those Italians who will never quite master French. He is bold enough to write straight off as he thinks. He is sometimes careless but never second-hand. He has judgment, and prefers to anything else “common feelings, current morality, usual expressions.” The gibberish of patch-work language is intolerable to him, like most modern books, in which, he writes to his friend Dalmistro, “you have the advantage of learning all at once English, German, French, not to speak of metaphysics, and a wondrous number of other subjects.” He has the good taste not to be an Encyclopædist. Good taste, indeed, more than anything else is his distinguishing quality.

He has suffered. If he generally contrives to laugh over his troubles, sometimes too he weeps at them ; and his smile is often full of tears. The sorrow which completes and exalts a man has come among his experiences. In his metrical *Sermoni*, addressed to the patricians in purple and fine linen who live placidly in sumptuous country-houses on the Brenta, there is in places almost a sob. “I am alone, I cry out, and I am frightened and tremble ! . . .” For he has tried a hundred expedients, all in vain. He has covered the booksellers’ counters

with thousands of papers, in vain. In the very age of innocence, when children listen to the grandmother's tales in the chimney-corner, and believe in fair maidens who come out of an orange, he was deceived by the pedagogue who said, "My son, ply your book." His soul is torn to shreds by the nails and the thorn, the fire and the pincers. He sees nothing in front of him but "appearances and shadows." He has only one fortune left, one hope of peace, one refuge, and one treasure—the stone on which is graven the name of his unhappy kin; he gazes at it with fixed eyes; on his knees he begs it to open: "O my father, my father!" He has suffered anguish from the disease of writing; from having pawned his genius to rapacious booksellers, sold his brain by drachmas, paid out his mind ounce by ounce into the scales; "and, what is worse than all, the mind and the brain sell for less than beef and pork!" Ah! the bands of workers who troop home at dusk—the carpenters and smiths, who come out of their workshops and crowd along the bank! the craftsmen's wives who play the tambourine on the water at holiday-time! "Happy bodies, empty of mind!" he cries.

What is bitter is tonic. The cup of sorrow, whose strong drink he has tasted, makes him pity the inanities about him: the Man of Society, whose business is to make a few bows, to rest his idle limbs in an arm-chair, to utter a deep "Ah!" and say nothing, or just say, perhaps, "What's the news?"; the Cicisbeo, who walks trippingly, ogles a passer-by, and leaves a trail of perfume behind him; the Parasite, who pays his way with wanton stories and pieces of scandal; the Dancer, who expounds Greek and Roman legend with his legs; all these rouse his contempt and arm his hand with the scourge of satire. Against this caricature of humanity he will set a masculine and splendid age, when lovers used to buy horses' bits, instead of Flemish brooches; when the maw of the sons of Atreus would engulf whole



oxen ; when the first plaything for little fingers was the rough beard of a Chiron. By the fashionable preacher, who with one impassioned hand clasps the crucifix, and with the other squeezes his berretta, cries aloud, sobs, and speaks now like a mosquito, now like a bull—" and then you will hear an epidemic of coughing among the congregation "—he is put in mind of the gentle and pious figure of Basil, much translated by him, who read the scriptures brow on hand, and transformed their substance into his own heart's substance. The effeminate love of pleasure in the atmosphere of Venice recalls to him true Pleasure, the vigorous goddess whom Zeus put on the far side of toil, the rugged figure of Beauty who wipes the sweat from the moist brow, soothes the spirit intent on its labour, and frowns at the indolent burdens of the arm-chair and the couch.

Ages in which morality is at a low ebb have always been fertile of moralists ; and Count Gasparo Gozzi is *par excellence* the moralist, the self-appointed censor, of an age in which virtue is praised only on tombstones. But he is not of such sullen humour as to court the gloomy joy of vexing the world, nor of such unmeasured arrogance as to mistake his own stature and hope to change its course. With a " pillar-like " patience, convinced " that the human race must needs move as it moves now," he has nothing in him of the apostle, the Messiah, the leader of the people in the burning bush ; nothing of the inventor of a new theory, even of a new formula, for the world.

He is a flower of common sense, an exquisite smile on the surface of antique civilisation, a flicker of irony, a changing and glittering fantasy like a bright ripple in the harbour. He is the useless and delightful poet whom Plato would banish from his Republic. His gondola with its fragrant spoils carries no superfluous ballast, no burden of too weighty cares. He chastened style rather than morals ; his conscience is more literary than

ethical : his most virtuous indignation is like an elegant antithesis ; and he was never drawn into the rough undergrowth of political or religious quarrels. While all Europe wrangles about "dead emperors, and governments doomed to founder," Gasparo Gozzi is feeding chickens ; or, like Horace in the Via Sacra, noting the ludicrous manners of Venice in the Merceria ; or inventing little amusements to keep children awake.

Always and everywhere, he retains his charming tranquillity, which enables him to bear the worst strokes of fate as he bore the loss of a new cloak, which once, forgetting the modesty which becomes a Christian, and the raiment of celestial gold and azure with which providence would one day invest him, he had ordered. The man who stole it did him a service—leaving him humbler, and less in dread of stains and rents.

Such is the Count Gasparo Gozzi ; and, as such, he is a figure in Venice ; almost the official poet of the Republic, the man of letters *en titre*, the native and consecrated embodiment of literary renown. The Doge Marco Foscarini, for whom he prepared the materials of his "History of Venetian Letters," did not appoint him to the chair of Greek and Latin Literature at Padua on which his heart was set ; but he was made Corrector of Printed Books at Venice, Superintendent of the Craft of Booksellers at Venice, and was chosen to reorganise the schools at Padua. He is offered a hundred sequins by patricians to celebrate their weddings. At every festival of the State he is entrusted with some cantata to produce. For every Procurator's appointment he has to compose a speech. Still, he will not have himself styled the Celebrated. *Bel celeberrimo per mia fè!* he replies.

And seriously, he did ask himself why, after reading and writing and meditating so much, thinking all day long and a good part of the night too, and not being, after all, an oyster, and having a very fair memory, he had yet not

reached any high distinction in letters. He put it down to his too domesticated temper—never dreading to smile on the chance-comer, nor enough on his guard to interpose a silence between his remarks. He also observed with pain that he had perhaps not made sufficient quotations.

Caterina Dolfin-Tron, wife of the Procurator whom the common people surnamed “the Patron,” used all her influence to ease his declining years. The friendship between this great lady and the simple white-haired poet is one of the most attractive episodes in the last days of the Republic. She speaks of him as “her father,” and he calls her “the fair-haired being with the dainty complexion,” “Excellency, child of a father almost Illustrious,” “Excellency, my beneficent patroness”; and he signs his letters to her: “Your reputed father, your grandfather, your most humble, devout, and obliged slave and father for ever and ever, Amen, Gasparo Gozzi.”

She treats him with the most delicate affection, inviting his daughters to spend the autumn at her house in the country, sending him gifts of fruit, game, or fuel, lending him her box at the theatre, where, waited on as by an enchanter’s wand, he finds himself obeyed for the first time in his life. In return, he pays her with little attentions, as sending her the news when she is in the country, or taking her pelisse to the furrier’s for her, or reprimanding her dressmaker for idleness, or despatching to her a white hooded mantle lined with pink taffeta. “I am the commander-in-chief of your friends,” he wrote to her once (and he wrote to her almost every day). “Bishops, soldiers, and every one else came under my banner. Just think of all the battles in which our army has been engaged!” And when one day, in a fit of frenzy or despair—whether unconsciously, or only too conscious of his state, we cannot tell—the poor man fell out of his window into the Brenta,

it was she who had the first tidings, was alarmed, and intervened. "When I came into her room," writes Gasparo's brother, "I found her on a sofa weeping bitterly. The instant she saw me, she flung herself, half-swooning, into my arms. When she was able to speak, her voice broken with sobs, the only thing she could say was, 'My friend, go to Padua! save my father, save my father!'"

He is old now, very old. His wife, Luisa Bergalli, is dead. He has married another, one Sarah Cénet, a Frenchwoman stranded at Venice after cruel sufferings. Though a bridegroom, he is like a patriarch. He has a number of children leaping about his legs and calling him "Grandfather! Grandfather!" so that the children of the farmer's wife in imitation call him "Grandfather" too. His daughter Marina is often *enceinte*: he recognises in this the blood of the Gozzi, so extraordinarily prolific that he wondered that his sister the nun had never borne a child.

In old days, he used to laugh about his old servant-woman, whose skin was like a purse that you pick up on the road and then throw over the hedge; now it is the young maids that laugh behind his back at his decay. He lives on fowls so lean that they escape through the bars of their cage. He rides a horse of his own age, that dates from the siege of Troy. He has nothing left but a pair of feeble legs and a heart on wings. If the doctors pay him a visit, he sends a message that he is unwell, and apologises for being unable to receive them. He becomes himself again by strolling gently along the dusty road, and smelling a sage-flower or a rosebud in his hand. He has attacks of hypochondria, but at meal-times he forgets why. He walks about the fields, the orchards, and the sands, holds converse with the birds in the sky, and tills his garden reading Columella. When he goes on a journey, he takes his cat with him in a cage.

And one day at Christmastide, the old poet, who had never succeeded in learning to dance, and who said of himself, "The only good I have is a touch of romance in my mind," gives his delicate spirit back to God. On high the bright star awaited him, from whose window he was to look down on all the pettiness of this world, and console himself for having done so little in it.

Yet he was the acknowledged head among men of letters. Who will ever define the mind of Venice? Picturesque and whimsical; compounded of caprices as the Venetian architecture is compounded of arabesques; seasoned with a pinch of malice, as the scarcely brackish water of the lagoon is just tinged with salt; it is, in the untranslatable expression of a contemporary, all *scherzi* and *lepidetze*.

*Misce stultitiam consiliis brevem*, said Horace, perhaps the most-read poet of this Epicurean age. The Venetian mind obeyed the counsel of the protégé of Augustus, mingling its wisdom with a little dose of folly, bearing fool's cap and bell on its crown, combining its easy domestic charm with a touch of caprice—a quaint mixture of every kind of irony and every kind of brilliance. "It much resembles the polish of Athens and the gaiety of France, without being the one or the other," said Grosley. And if all the contemporary wits had a portion of this sprightliness and point, from the poet Lamberti, called by the aged Gamba "the Venetian Anacreon," down to the adventurer Casanova, in whose sallies the Prince de Ligne detected a flavour of Attic salt—to Gasparo Gozzi belongs the credit of having enriched the Venetian mind with all his elegance and all his lustre.

If the poor bookseller's hack, as he truly called himself, had no leisure to bequeath any great work, and if he was outstripped by others in all the walks of literature which he opened up (*Baretti's Frustra letteraria* had



more renown than his *Osservatore*, Parini's *Giorno* put the *Sermoni* in the shade, and Dante was to find more splendid champions than the author of the *Difesa*), yet he brought out a distinctive side of the Venetian mind, and asserted its rightful position in the classic literature of Italy.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PASSION FOR MUSIC

MUSIC at Venice was a passion. Listen to Burney, a man of little reputation nowadays, although Rousseau dedicated to him one of his books. Charles Burney, Doctor of Music of the University of Oxford, was an eager little man, of amiable character and polished manners. Johnson said, "It is but natural to love him." His daughter, Frances, to whom we owe the novels "Cecilia" and "Evelina ; or, A Young Lady's Entrance into the World," says much to the same effect.

Having formed the idea, and even the outline, of an extensive work on music, to be called "A General History of Music," Burney, being of a methodical mind, resolved to collect his materials before he wrote. With this object he went to Italy, where music then was in its youth, just as painting was in its youth after Giotto in the age of Ghirlandaio. Making Turin his starting-point in the first days of July 1770, Burney devoted all his attention to music, gathering it from every possible quarter, the churches, the theatres, the cafés, even the streets. He climbed into organ-lofts full of dust and stains of candle-grease. He sat at harpsichords with black keys, by the side of aged priests who took snuff. He attended masses in concert-halls with enthusiastic crowds. He moved among dilettanti, professionals, virtuosi, choirmasters, and teachers of counterpoint, turned over scores of Father Martini, listened to Jomelli, and called on Piccini. However, when he came to the end of his musical pilgrimage, and had travelled the whole length of the tuneful penin-

sula, the place which seems to have charmed him most was Venice.

Here, in the liquid landscape, at the foot of rose-coloured palazzi fit for the Sleeping Beauty, in the midst of a kindly air, under the blue sky, music is in its home. One may think it has always been so, and that Sansovino was right when he said that at Venice music has *la sua propria sede*. A few steps away from the Piazza, the silence is so great.

Given the bend of a canal, a pillared window-frame with a tendril of jessamine climbing about it, a passing gondola, the oar scattering its shower of silver drops : "Premi !" —the gondola passes almost noiselessly, crosses a belt of shadow, then a belt of sunlight : "Stali !" When it has disappeared at the turn of the canal, a star-like jessamine-flower falls from the window on the quiet water's surface, and you hear the fall of the petal in the great stillness. Then music comes into being spontaneously, as though in its native country.

From the old Flemish master Adriaen Willaert and his immediate pupils, Cipriano de Rore, Niccoló Vicentino, and Francesco della Viola ; from Zarlino, and Gabrieli the bold innovator, and Monteverde with his revelations and strokes of genius, there is a continuous tradition ; and in the ducal chapel the series of masters is complete, like the series of doges and patriarchs. Each new endeavour has added to the sum ; experiments have been made in all directions. And thus Venice in the eighteenth century is the land of melody with long and glorious traditions at its back, with its chapel of S. Marco, with its four *conservatoires*, with its seven theatres, and with the famous songs of its gondoliers. Venice, which first opened a playhouse for the performance of opera, is the seat of an ancient operatic school ; it is, with Naples, the greatest seminary of vocal music in Europe ; and, through Tartini, the home of the characteristic instrument of Italy, the instrument which was given by Raphael to his

Apollo on Parnassus, and which the divine Corelli played like Apollo himself—the violin.

Lotti was born at Venice in 1655, Marcello in 1685, Galuppi in 1703, Bertoni in 1737, Furlanetto in 1738. Tartini belongs to Pirano, as Galuppi, surnamed Buranello, belongs to the isle of Burano. Vivaldi, called the Prete Rosso, a model for Bach, is also a Venetian; and so is Pescetti.

It was at Venice that the best foreign masters taught in the conservatoires: Domenico Scarlatti, considered the most accomplished harpsichord-player of his time; Porpora, who presided over the first appearance of Haydn; Hasse, Jomelli, and Sacchini. It was at Venice, beside the calm waters, that Handel and Gluck, Piccini and Paisiello, wrote some of their sweetest operas; and it was at Venice that they first produced them to a dazzled audience. Cimarosa died at Venice, and Mozart, the exquisite youth, celebrated the Venetian Carnival. "All theatres in the world, including Italy, have musicians from Venice," writes Lalande the traveller. Algarotti comes to gather documents for his Essay on Opera, Jean-Jacques to initiate himself in Italian music, Metastasio to hand his libretti to the publisher. Hence the devotees of music bear away their richest treasures of manuscript scores. La Banti as a girl sang here in the cafés. Faustina Bordoni, too, was a Venetian, the very mould of sprightliness and grace, full of frolic and *tempo rubato*; she loved to play tricks with the measure, and sported with rhythm like a bird swinging on the tip of a branch. She was painted by Rosalba and acclaimed by Europe.

Old instructors, fastidious, and soaked in their art; public precentors, and private choir-trainers; organists, and composers of motets; black cassocks, and orphans in white frocks; virtuosi decked with military orders; players of the viol, the harpsichord, and the hautboy; composers, singers, instrumentalists, contrapuntists, tran-

scribers—there is a whole crowd of people for whom music is the business of life. They have been converted to it as the Christian turns to God. They have devoted to it all the force of their being ; and, in order to understand it and to command a view of the whole, they have cultivated all its branches at once. In this city of frivolous prowess, what is the dominant tradition, the current taste, and the deference to order ? We can judge this from a contemporary work, the delicate and spirited satire of the *Teatro alla Moda*, in which the great Marcello is pleased to mock at the new methods of music. For this little book is something more than a charming smile on the surface of a grave face ; it is the testament of a conscience subjected to a lofty ideal. If, in a momentary concession to the comic genius of his countrymen, the author of the *Psalms* amuses himself with sketching such ready and ironic silhouettes, it is because there is a cult he solemnises and a God he reveres. Reading this book, we are able to see into the interiors and the habits of the music-loving city. One day, when officiating at the altar, the Prete Rosso, struck with a musical conception, forgets the divine miracle which is taking place through him, and goes off to the sacristy to put it down on paper. When haled before the Holy Office for this sacrilege, the hare-brained creature is acquitted. One evening, as Marcello is meditating at the window of his palazzo, he hears the voice of some girls passing in a boat ; and, because of the *soprano sfogato* of one of them—the “ agile voice,” “ brilliant as a pearl,” the “ voice which was itself a consolation,” of Rosanna singing in the dark—he, the Venetian noble, gives his love and his name to the unknown girl. Tartini dreams that he has lent his violin to the devil, who plays on it, wielding the bow by his bedside ; and, in his attempt to recall the fantastic, unheard-of, superhuman air which he heard in his dream, Tartini writes his wonderful Devil’s Sonata. Hasse sings to the harpsichord in an assembly,



and, from hearing him, the sportive and brilliant Faustina swears that she will have no husband but this *Caro Sassone* with his fair hair ; he has two daughters by her, and in his dwelling by the little church of S. Marcuola modestly accompanies their clear voices. *Arpeggi* stream from a lighted window on the Canal ; a gondola stops, with the little star of light at its head ; then two, then twenty, and, when the piece is finished, applause rises from out of the night towards the open window. Baldassare Galuppi is the musical genius of the moment.

Born, as we have seen, in 1703, on the Isle of Burano, whence his sobriquet of Buranello, "the little one of Burano," the pupil first of his father, then of the austere Lotti, he has a brilliant and complete career. He is an excellent harpsichord-player. He is organist to the Gritti, who pay him a hundred sequins. He is choir-master at S. Marco. He is director of the Conservatoire at the Incurabili. And he is purveyor by appointment to the churches and theatres of the tuneful city.

It is Galuppi who expresses in music the grace of the time. He is full of the most delicate ideas, all caprice, fire, mocking vivacity, blithe merriment. His vein trickles from its source and flows out, lavishing itself in the fair and happy light which Tiepolo loved to paint, flooding the heart with vernal freshness. For this son of Venice neither effort nor labour nor contemplation seem to exist. He is very easy and happy. He gives in a single year two, three, four *opéras-bouffe*, that exquisite form of theatrical art which he and a few others invented ; for fifty years, almost without taking breath, he produces them unwearyingly ; his fire seems to grow with age, and we owe him more than seventy operas (the libretti mainly by Goldoni—a most Venetian partnership). Then we must add his grand operas, and his religious music—motets, masses, and the psalms, "rich in new phrases, full of taste, harmony, and reflection," which he is to continue writing down to the end. Add also the

attention he gives to his orchestra at the Incurabili, dominated by his orderly and luminous intelligence—no performer seeking to shine at the expense of the others, everything dependent, harmonised. Thus it is that his repute is world-wide. In 1741 he is invited to London; in 1765 by the great Catherine, who offers him a court-carriage, a salary of four thousand roubles, and, after the performance of his *Didone Abbandonata*, a thousand ducats in a diamond box “as a present from the Queen of Carthage.” In the streets of Venice he is greeted as one of the national glories.

Although he is nearly seventy when Burney meets him, he does not show it. His imagination remains eternally young. He is a small and spare old man, with intelligence in every line of his face, his conversation sparkling with wit. He lives in a house adorned by a little picture of Veronese. In his study there is nothing but a simple clavichord and plenty of ruled paper on which he scrawls for amusement. He has married off several of his children, and has many left to provide for. He sets himself to teach them manners at the same time as morals. And, when Burney asks him to define good music, he answers without circumlocution: *Vaghezza, chiarezza, e buona modulazione.*

Music is a passion. “It is,” says De Brosses, “an inconceivable rage.” It is a state function at the same time as a minister of delight. Venice is capable of making Guadagni the singer a Knight of St. Mark, clamouring for Handel’s *Agrippina* twenty-seven nights running, and, after the performance of Cimarosa’s *Convitato di pietra*, escorting the master home in a triumphal procession by the light of torches. And, if the mobile Venetian runs from caprice to caprice in his light silk cloak, you should see him when he is hearing music. “He seems,” says Burney, “to agonise with pleasure too great for the aching sense.” He hears it at parties, at church, in the conservatoires, in the theatre, in the very street—everywhere.

Musical parties are perpetual. "Scarcely an evening when there is not a concert somewhere." Sometimes two or three are announced for the same evening, and that in every rank of society, from the smaller bourgeois up to the patricians—the Gritti with Galuppi in their pay, the Labia giving a first performance of Bertoni's *Caïeto* in their palazzo, the Balbi giving the first performance of Paisiello's *Il Finto re Teodoro di Venezia* at their country-house. An old priest sings with elegance at the harpsichord. Or a *zentildonna*, with a string of pearls in her hair, sings barcarolles. Or some splendid symphony is performed by friends in concert. The dilettanti have taken their seats before the music-stands, settled their silken coat-tails on each side of the chair, tucked up their lace ruffles over the sleeves, and unrolled the fair manuscript score in front of them. And, before the contemplative company, the performance commences, grave, slow, almost religious, only interrupted from time to time by a pause in which candles are snuffed, violins tuned, and bows rubbed with rosin; and then the snuff-boxes go round.

Every day there is some musical ceremony or other in the churches—for a ducal procession, for a hero's anniversary, for a religious festival, for all the occurrences, sacred or profane, of the State. It is music more than preaching that fills the churches; through music men pay their dues to God, and commune with Him; a prayer in Venice is called a *Salve Regina*, a *Stabat Mater*, a motet, a madrigal, or an oratorio. Masses sung, or performed, works rehearsed many times before the day, productions of great splendour, lasting five consecutive hours, which bring together, on a platform specially constructed and decked with ribbons, as many as four hundred musicians—for which two organs and two orchestras answer each other across the same nave—for which sometimes, as at S. Marco under the management of Galuppi, six orchestras are provided. Venice flocks to

these celebrations as to a pleasure that costs nothing, an intellectual feast. This kind of exaltation matches her genius, and she loves it. After the glitter of the lagoon, the gloom of the church is gracious—the soft light from the gold, placid outlines of tombs, and the doge, with bowed head, smiling under his cambric headdress—little women, pretty faces, abbés playing with fans; whispers, bows, and threats with the finger-tip. A sudden silence. From the depths of the past a voice rises, filling the space, peopling the church, draping the arches with regal splendour. And we have some heroic fugue of Lotti, colossal and bare, without flourish or ornament, unaccompanied save perhaps by Scarlatti's great organ. Or it is the sudden burst of a psalm of Marcello—

*“I cieli immensi narrano  
Del grande Iddio la gloria . . .”*

springing out in a lightning-flash of melody, furrowing heaven with its line of fire. It is with these church-pieces that contemporary Venice illustrates the page of a courteous and indulgent Gospel, full of brightness.

On Saturday and Sunday people attend Vespers at the Hospitals. There are four—the Pietà, the Mendicanti, the Incurabili, the Ospedaletto—rather conservatoires than convents, where orphans and love-children are taught such sweet music that, says Rousseau, “it has not its like in Italy, nor in the rest of the world.” There is no rigour in the seclusion of these girls, which discreetly admits the patronage of some Mæcenas among music-lovers, interesting himself in their progress, and rejoicing to see the first-fruits of talent and the graces of body unfold at the same time. The aged and famous master who trained them belongs wholly to this world; he revealed Love to them by the very art he taught; while their hearts are blossoming, Love sings in them; even before they know him, they speak his divine language and inspire the world with it. Sometimes a hundred



of them are chosen, and invited to go and sing in the moonlight, in some beautiful garden, in honour of a princely or royal visitor. Twice a week they appear in public behind slender bars, dressed in white with a bunch of pomegranate-flowers above their ears, and their young throats uncovered. "And I swear to you," wrote Président de Brosses to his friend Blancey, "that there was never anything so charming." They play the flute, the organ, the hautboy, the violoncello, the bassoon; indeed, "no instrument is huge enough to frighten them." They conduct the orchestra with such determination that "for a big performance, and to be whipper-in to an orchestra, the Venetian girl beats any one." Or they sing with all their heart and soul, pouring forth their inner raptures, spreading abroad the grace which moves in them, giving outward expression to their youth, which is nothing but voice. Such concerts are one of the delightful particularities of Venetian life, drawing great crowds; travellers never fail to go, and to add their quota of praise when they return. "I know not whether I was most delighted with the composition, or with the execution," Burney remarks of the *Incurabili*. "I had no conception of such voices," writes Goethe of the *Mendicanti*. "I cannot conceive anything so voluptuous and so moving as this music," adds Rousseau; "the treasures of art, the exquisite taste of the songs, the beauty of the voices, the precision in rendering—everything in these charming concerts works together to produce an impression which certainly is not *du bon costume*, but which I doubt whether any man's heart could resist." Not *du bon costume*? Doubtless that is so; it is profane music, theatrical music, music in which angels and saints sing like the heroes and heroines of opera; but so pure, so noble, and so beautiful, that one wonders if the chosen in Paradise have anything more heavenly sweet, and what else the angels could find to sing. So thinks the public, not refining on its enjoyment, satisfied to be in



transports; knowing the names of the white-robed orphans behind the gilt lattice-work. Their names are in every mouth along the grey streets—La Chiaretta, La Zabetta, La Margarita, L'Anna-Maria, and La Padoanina or La Ferrarese. Like children in a family, they are called by their short names. And are they not indeed children, the daughters of Venice, whom the Republic has taken lovingly on her knee, caressing with her smile, applauding with her hands, and showing off to strangers as her favourites and her brightest treasure?

In mask-time all the opera-houses are full—S. Crisostomo, S. Angelo, S. Cassiano, S. Giovanni e Paolo, S. Fantino, S. Samuele, S. Mosè—pit and boxes, patrician wigs and gondoliers' caps. Here, above all, there is prodigious consumption of music. This greedy people call for it again and always, insatiable like a child, and like a child crying for more. Always something else, something fresh, something more beautiful; so that De Brosses tells us that "last year's music is no longer the thing," and Burney, that an opera once heard is treated "like last year's almanack"; and nothing is printed—it is not worth while to print or to preserve anything of this spontaneous efflorescence, in which styles, fashions, and tastes run along and chase each other laughing.

Who can tell worthily of these feasts of intelligence, in the land of Monteverde, of Cavalli and Legrenzi? Ideal evenings, as charming as on the water—more charming, since they were visited by genius. A whole section of the life of Venice, and doubtless the most attractive, was unrolled within these walls. Here, in the blaze of chandeliers from Murano, came to birth some of the purest works of eighteenth-century music, from Handel's *Agrippina* in 1709 to Gluck's *Hipermestra* in 1742, from Hasse's *Artaserse* in 1730 to Jomelli's *Merope* in 1747; the *Amor in Ballo* of Paisiello, the *Convitato di pietra* of Cimarosa, the *Servo Padrone* or the *Griselda* of Piccini; here it was that the Venetian school, whose

first opera-house Monteverde had seen opened in 1637, spread abroad, through Lotti, Vivaldi, Galuppi, Bertoni, and the rest, the treasures of its sprightly softness and happy melancholy, and here flourished, in their days of red lips and rounded throats, the singers of the spring-tide of melody, Caffarelli and Farinelli, Guadagni and Pacchierotti, La Faustina and La Cuzzoni; and La Grassini, who was still singing in 1797 in spite of all, though Bonaparte was at the gates, ringing the feminine city with his grip of steel.

A spirit of grace haunts these regions. As the century moves on, the great masses of past music have been grooved and cleared; they open to the smile of the daylight like a Venetian palace pierced with windows; and, like a Venetian palace with its stone fretwork, clothe themselves in light decorations, skilful arabesques, delicate embroideries, and the capricious little networks of foam left on the sand by the ebbing wave. Calm Virgilian landscapes; transparent shadows percolated by beams of melody and sunlight; ancient and sacred groves, inhabited by gods under the myrtles; clear and noble figures of Metastasio's drama with the utterance of Racine—this is what they are. Graces spun out into the bright atmosphere, rhythms sinking and rising like waves, harmonies interlacing like couples in the dance, ripples unfolding, breaths of wind and chords of song floating by—they are this too. All the love there is scattered about the world, all the sorrow and affection, all the home-sickness and longing, have been gathered and heaped up here, and flow out from open lips. A rain of delight falls on the soul of youth, dewdrops like pearls on the tip of the grass-blades, teardrops like pearls on the ends of eyelashes, showing a rainbow through—and then there is the *opéra-bouffe*, firing its rocket of laughter, open like a street scene, limpid like a slice of blue sky, wholesome, brisk, vigorous, alert, full of character, with its flame of merriment setting fire to the mind in a moment.

You listen; you are far, far away, still farther, beyond space and time, deep in the gardens of the soul, on azure lawns, on the other side of the moon, at the brink of the springs of ecstasy, at the source of the river of forgetfulness. You are listening to Farinelli, and that divine phrase which he sang ten years running to the King of Spain—

*"Per questo dolce amplesso . . ."*

Or Guadagni, and the sweet plaint which rises from Gluck's *Orfeo*—

*"Che farò senza Euridice? . . ."*

And all those obsolete airs which shut within their crystal walls the whole world of sentiment for a whole era. And the duet of Pergolese, where the sorrow of all partings has utterance in lamentation—

*"Nei giorni tuoi felici  
Ricordati di me . . ."*

And the duet of Cimarosa, where all the glory of the morning shines—

*"Prima che spunti  
In ciel l'aurore . . ."*

No more talking, no motion, no breathing, no beckoning to a mask; no shifting the spoon in the sherbet-glass, no whispered addresses over your fair neighbour's shoulder. You listen. Silence reigns as though in a church. The house hangs on the organ-point, as Olympus hung on Jove's golden chain. And then, when the voice is silent, a delirious rapture breaks forth; sonnets flutter on silken leaves, doves with silver bells alight at the singer's feet; kisses are thrown towards the stage, languishing cries: *Ah! siestu benedetta! . . . Benedetto el pare che t' ha fatta! . . . Ah! cara, mi buto zoso. . . .*

But why speak of the theatres, the conservatoires, and the churches? Music is everywhere. It bursts through walls and overflows partitions. Here it cannot

be hemmed within doors like paintings in a museum, nor barred from spreading abroad and mixing among the people. In Venice it is not one of the arts which embellish life; it is a social necessity. It is not a superfluous talent; it is one of the conditions of existence. It is not a form of culture, but a call of nature—nay, itself the nature of this bird-like people, whose brain, like the nightingale's and the poet's, is its throat.

Music is loved spontaneously, and understood without effort. What need of effort to enjoy the smiling landscape or the grace of a woman passing by? That is how it is enjoyed; people treat it cavalierly, taking pleasure in it without even noticing it; so much so, that, except at the *aria*, they chatter in the theatre; and, in the streets, pass the most delightful harmonies without turning their heads; and so it is that at Venice the travelling musician, who plays like a master, causes no more surprise than the sailor or the oyster-seller in London.

Music is the domestic speech, the sweet maternal language which one never remembers learning, the winged and melodious utterance chosen by God for the city of stone and water. People live in music, express themselves in music; in music they pray and they weep, they love and they scorn, they sport and they laugh; aubades and serenades, villottes and barcarolles, dance-tunes and boat-songs, psalms, hymns, and *canzonette* lighter than a feather in the wind—every state of mind, every fashion of sentiment, is rendered in music, and the city with the tuneful heart vibrates between its sides of pearl and coral like the sounding-board of some immense and precious instrument.

“Squares, streets, and canals,” says Goldoni, “all full of singing; tradesmen sing as they dispose of their goods, workmen sing as they leave their tasks, gondoliers sing as they await their customers.” “Harmony prevails in every part,” says Burney; “if two of the common people walk together arm in arm, they are always singing,

and seem to converse in song ; if there is company on the water, in a gondola, it is the same ; a mere melody, unaccompanied with a second part, is not to be heard in this city ; most of the ballads in the streets are sung in duo." "On the Piazza," says Grosley, "a man from the dregs of the people, a cobbler or a smith with the dress of his trade, starts an *aria* ; other folk of his class join in, singing the *aria* in several parts with such correctness, precision, and taste as one will scarcely meet with in the highest society of our northern lands." Music fills the Piazza with swarming melodies, unlooked-for orchestras, little concerts in windy spots ; it drops from high illumined windows a trail of light and sound along the lagoon ; escapes from the open booths in the market ; circles about in the *campielli*, sets life to a rhythm, accompanies work and heightens pleasure. There is the half-naked street boy of whom Gozzi speaks, moving through the streets "all harmony, like a nightingale." There are the girls settled in the Piazzetta (Fontana tells us) who sing from morn to eve and transfigure the square into song. And Goethe tells us of the women of Pelestrina and Malamocco who, while their husbands are at sea, sing on the shore, sing untiringly while the golden twilight falls, sing till out of the depths of space a distant voice answers them, taking up the refrain—the voice of the returning fishermen who announce their coming, and across the expanse embrace the watchers with their song. "Is not that beautiful, very beautiful ?" Goethe asked his mistress.

But it is at night most of all, when the silence of the water is increased by the silence of the air, that Venice gives expression to all its soul in melody. Clear nights of Venice ! nights unspeakable and divine ! The moonlight trembling on the rippling water ; the ambushed shadow at the corner of wan palaces ; a little wavering light, like a church-lamp in the depths of the choir ; everything has grown still, everything seems to be listen-



ing ; it seems that some sacred rite is being performed ; it is so beautiful that one thinks it a dream, so calm that one holds one's breath. Then it is that the oppressed spirit flows forth of itself, serenades on wings spring out towards the stars, and the stanzas of Tasso rise from the lips of gondoliers. One begins ; and another, unseen, unknown, lost in the darkness, lying on a promontory, or leaning on a balustrade, or crouching in his gondola, takes it up. . . . " A distant voice," adds Goethe, " of strange effect . . . with something indefinable about it, moving one even to tears . . . like a complaint without sadness."

You say, " This frivolous people." You say, " This effeminate and trivial people." You say, " They cared for nothing but trifles." True, alas ! And yet, however severe a judgment their faults may deserve, we should never forget that they had in their hearts the worship of music, and another great thing—respect for the night.

They did not outrage or insult the night. They calmed their thoughts in presence of its almost sacred melody : " the only music," says Baretti, " that the Italians enjoy in silence, as though afraid to disturb the peace and the stillness of the dark."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE LESSER VENETIAN MASTERS

THERE is not only music, there is painting. In the eighteenth century, Venice is the only Italian city with an original school of painting.

While in the South the influence of Pietro da Cortona still subsists, and while in the North the imitators of the imitators of the Carracci put themselves forward as sovereign models for imitation, Venice is pushing out in fresh directions. "At Venice," writes the worthy Lanzi, "we can see the rise of certain styles, original at least, if not faultless." "And Venice," adds Cochin, "can boast of possessing the most skilful painters in Italy." He goes even further; he asserts in so many words that these painters rank on an equality "with the best in all Europe."

Let us pass Sebastiano Ricci, who died in 1734, called by Mariette "a very fine intelligence"; and Antonio Balestra, who died in 1740, the spirit of grace and merriment, profound in knowledge, facile of talent; and Giovanni Battista Piazzetta, who died in 1753, and rejoiced in great effects of shadow and light. Around and after these crowd a constellation of artists, all fire and wit, in whose ranks appear not only admirable portrait-painters like Amigoni, and excellent landscapists like Marco Ricci, but also the fine workers in fresco, boldly decorative, daring mighty mechanisms, the renowned and brilliant knights of the *fa presto* who dazzle their age. Their glory extends far and wide. The Europe of grotto-work palaces quarrels over the possession of them. They pass from mansion to mansion in the service of great

people. They are Members of Royal Academies, Directors of Galleries of the Fine Arts, Court-painters ; in the pay of laureate Cæsars, of sovereign Empresses, of the Kings of England and Spain and Poland, of Electors Palatine, of Prince-Bishops, of the Prince de Condé, of the Duke of Orleans. The Emperor Joseph II. congratulates himself on having seen at Verona two things of rare excellence, the Amphitheatre, and Giovanni-Bettino Cignaroli, "the first painter in the world." But we should have to give all their names—Pellegrini, and Diziani, and Nazzari, and Rotari, and Fontebasso, and Guarana. The list would last till to-morrow. But out of this crowd at work, one name stands forth, summing up the rest since he excels them all—Giambattista Tiepolo.

Tiepolo is a great painter, and nothing but a painter. Painting is an intoxication to him. His transports call for ceilings of church and palace, throne-rooms, stairs of honour, spaces of vast extent, on which his genius suddenly breaks out like the loud clash of golden cymbals. At Venice, and in most of the cities ruled by the Republic, over Italy and at Milan, in Bavaria and at Würzburg, in Spain and at Madrid, he covered immeasurable expanses of wall with his painting, bright as the light of day.

He extemporises—"executing a picture in less time than another man takes to grind his colours." To gain a wager, he paints in ten hours the twelve figures of the apostles, half life-size. It is as though he had made his own all the experiments and all the conquests of the past in painting ; his strength is terrific, and he is pleased to display it, boasting of it, playing with it. Dishevelled, headlong, hurled through space like a whirlwind—arms and legs in the air, impossible foreshortenings, draperies and hair flying in the wind, horses prancing furiously, galloping chariots, architecture upside down, great clouds torn asunder, and light streaming in torrents—such are the subjects of his ceilings ; they are like the exploits of heroes. His mind has a nodding plume at

its crest, it is haunted with an uproar of sound, led along by a giddy impulse ; and at the same time a sovereign grace has constrained him to its rhythmical progress. The Renaissance with its pomp and magnificence took in her lap this bastard of Veronese, conceived on a mad night, nursed him, and sang to him, and brought him up on her design.

Rinaldo, his hands full of flowers, turns away his face from the diamond shield in which his youth is mirrored ; beneath the pale green and lilac parasol held above him by a slave, a Contarini, calm as a portrait of Titian, welcomes Henry III., King of France, to his villa at Mira ; on a car harnessed to peacocks, touched up by a little Love with a straw-plaited switch, Hera goddess of air, silver-girdled, in a white robe with bands of gold, a golden sceptre in hand, springs forth from rosy clouds. In the painter's flaming imagination, there are negroes and dwarfs, turbans and simarres, white coursers and golden ewers ; an owl perched on a fir branch, a parrot preening its feathers on the capital of a pillar, bats wheeling in the dusk, russet banners set up, long trumpets ; white sea-horses, their flanks harnessed with seaweed and coral, ridden by Tritons and *amoretti*, whipped by foam and sunlight, drawing naked Amphitrite over the radiant sea. On the horizon are women leaning on pale balustrades ; porticoes stretch with their vista of colonnades ; and in the middle of this tumult is the calm and motionless marble.

There are sun-cloaks, pages bearing cushions, obelisks springing suddenly from the clouds ; janissaries and halberds ; galley-masts and pasteboard noses ; theorbo-players and princesses adorned with pearls ; ostriches, sarcophagi, big hats, white statues, bright nude figures, precious instruments of luxury ; and *amoretti*, troops of *amoretti*, playing with flowers, hiding under draperies, peeping from behind an antiquated arabesque, scattering on butterfly-wings, showing their backs or their smiles

as they fly ; a crowd, a mob of forms, borrowed and brought together from everywhere ; weddings at Cana, the Piazza in Carnival, Jewish scenes from the Ghetto ; all collected there, why or how no one knows, just to delight the eyes and to amuse with paradox. Then there is his negro Alim, whom he loved for the fine sooty tones of his body ; then his model, the supple Christina, the fair daughter of gondoliers, who stood to him for the Blessed Virgin. S. Lucia, S. Catherine, S. Helena, Iphigenia, Cleopatra, Ariadne, Amphitrite ; now attired in brocades with heavy slashings, now naked save for a cameo bracelet on her arm.

He is wholly illogical : he dwells in the heavenly land of the absurd. He allows himself every kind of carelessness, just as he claims the boldest licences. He is not afraid of a risk, he is no slave to verisimilitude ; he is essentially immodest. What does it matter to him, that in his " Martyrdom of Christians under Trajan " he puts a pipe in the mouth of the Roman Consul ? or that among the spectators of the " Communion of the Apostles," he figures one man with his feet in the water pulling off his shirt ? He does not look so close as that ; he never looks too close. And in his frescoes as in his canvases, as in his series of etchings, in his *Capricci*, in his *Scherzi di fantasia*, he invents in every direction. He gives a loose rein to his burlesque imagination. He does sacrifice to his bizarre humour. He obeys his spirit of mirth. He laughs. Yet he is great throughout, giving style to whatever he takes in hand, raising to a higher power everything he touches ; full of extravagance and theatricality.

His gaiety is magnificent, a sounding inundation ; youth and merriment in a burst of beauty. And, above all, light ; all the light of the sky and all the light of the sea, all the light of Venice which his eyes have concentrated in their pupils, which has impregnated him to the marrow, in which he swims as in a bath. He paints not ideas,



scarcely even forms—but light. His ceilings are radiant like the sky of birds ; his poems seem to be written in the element of clouds. *Fiat lux!* Let there be light ! Light is fairer than all things, fairer than man, than woman, the fairest of God's creatures ; and Tiepolo knows all the tricks and all the triumphs of light.

The dazzling brightness of the open air is familiar to him ; he is drunk with the transparency of the atmosphere. He sports in the magic of the surrounding ether, and plays with beams like a rope-walker with his golden balls. He knows the golden greys, the pearly whites, the warm yellows ; the glitter of a straw in the cattle-shed, the daylight that seems to fall from lamps of opal, and the rosy rays that steal out from quivering dawns. Amber brightness, blushing pallor, fleeting carnation and pearl, all that is liquid and diaphanous in the universe, all the rainbow-secrets of the wave, the sky, and the cloud, everything that glitters and twinkles and changes—all this he knows.

He is not merely a great eighteenth-century painter ; he is a great painter absolutely ; the patrician artist working for patricians, who perform great deeds and commission frescoes. He is the contemporary of whatever in Venice still rises to the height of past memories. He must be placed beside the Doge Foscarini, the Admiral Emo, the musician Marcello. He is the citizen of the opulent Sovereign State, at whose feet Neptune poured from his couch a stream of coins and pearls and corals—as figured by him over a door in the Scrutinio. In him tradition is still extant, the Renaissance is protracted, the Decadence clothed in majesty. An age which could produce such a master is still great.

Still, he does not stand alone, nor even alone with his circle of enchanting virtuosi. In their shadow are the lesser masters.

Rosalba Carriera was eighteen years old ; she was a

lace-maker, bending her interestingly ugly countenance over the delicate *point de Venise* ; when, her lace trade being in a bad way, a Frenchman called Monsù Jean, by which is to be understood Jean Stève the painter, taught her how to paint in miniature. She succeeded very well ; so well and so quickly that a few years later, about 1700, when she completed a little portrait of her friend Antonio Orsetti and gave it to him for nothing, he wanted to reward her for this pretty work. He offered her two pairs of gloves and two perfumed sachets. And this delicate art, inscribing itself on ivory or vellum with a pencil fine as a thread, going in the hollow of one's hand, drawing admiration through a magnifying-glass, gives a fair indication of the form of the new painting.

No longer big frescoes and big spaces. No more great subjects and mighty mechanism, nor the vast heroic expanses. Now it is small easel-pictures hung up on the wainscoting, shaded pastels sloping their oval frames in the corner of a drawing-room, elegant vignettes on the leaves of little books ; and beautiful, glowing, and delicate miniatures, bound with copper, or shut in a shark-skin case with raised silver, or encircled with precious stones on the lids of boxes.

The new spirit gives birth to a new vision. A different world brings into being a different school. And Venice, after giving to the world her daring wielders of the brush, produces her lesser masters. There is La Rosalba, daughter of a procurator's agent, born in 1676 ; there is Canaletto, son of a theatrical scene-painter, born in 1697 ; Pietro Longhi, son of a skilled silversmith, born in 1702 ; Francesco Guardi, born in 1712 ; Bernardo Bellotto, in 1720 ; and all those who followed them or whom they followed, all their pupils, all their imitators ; and through them, thanks to them, an exquisite little Renaissance of art, bright, lively, ingenious, sportive, happy, full of grace and fire.

Coming down from the high scaffoldings, they draw in

their horizon while they fine down their talent, they become more exact according as they limit themselves ; and, by the fact of doing so, they are new. New, first of all, in the field they cover and the space they measure out ; so that Canaletto was not long in " excommunicating " the stage, and the immense scenes he used to paint in his father's shop ; so that Pietro Longhi seems to have soon tired of painting " Adorations " in churches or " Falls of the Titans " on palace stairways ; so that La Rosalba demanded twenty-five louis from Président de Brosses for a Magdalen " as big as your hand." Their visions can be taken in at a glance, and their widest conceptions are measured in inches.

They are new, moreover, by the processes they invent and the improvements they bring to their art. We find them absorbed in technical questions. Attributing great importance to the subject, they take pains to endow their art with unpublished writings, and different methods of expression. Thus, for instance, La Rosalba gives new life to the art of miniature by opening a wider field to it and clothing it in a liquid atmosphere. Thus it is that she brings pastel to a degree of brilliance and freshness unknown before her time, which La Tour would turn to advantage afterwards. Thus Pietro Longhi tries his hand at painting on glass. Thus Canaletto employs the *camera obscura*. Thus, too, engraving on copper, never using cross-lines, but letting the whiteness of the paper show through, and husbanding it with extreme care, he gets the quivering and luminous yellow of filtered sunlight, which the Venetian school of contemporary engraving, and Tiepolo at its head, adopt with a smile.

But their novelty consists above all in the leading fact that they deliberately leave historical and religious subjects for genre-painting. They no longer imagine, but use their eyes. They no longer compose, but observe. And, as though they had become enervated in their creative faculty, they cling with a docility almost slavish

to contemporary reality. They work after nature. They express directly what is within their range and at their door. And they tell us of Venice, the Venice of their time, which glittered in their sight, the Venice which lived and is dead—its modes, its manners, its festivities, its people, its privacies, its landscape, its scenery, all its happy life, all its charming movement.

And so in them and by their work, in bright forms, in transparent visions, in aspects of grace and light and intelligence, the unique city is bodied forth.

To begin with La Rosalba, the eldest and also the most famous.

Her art is something vaporous, volatile, hardly fixed ; like a pollen-dust of grace falling from the calyx of flowers and the wings of butterflies, like the shadow of a semblance in a painted flower. In this luminous and feminine handwriting, which might seem invented specially for the coquetries of her age, she gives us (and with what skill !) the effeminate society of the day, the glossy and powdered world of Venice, the figures of fashion and holiday, the travelling lords, and the highnesses who make a stay, and the exiled Kings of Candide, and the *zentildonne* with their air and graces. . . .

Yes, beneath her nimble pencil, whose touch alights like a caress and plucks the blossom of things as it flies, there rise to life those women of Venice adored by Europe, all the dainty priestesses of the land of Cythera, all the queens of pastime whom Love has ferried in his boat : La Cornaro, and La Carrer, and La Zenobio, and La Pisani, and La Maria Labia, the friend of Frenchmen, "very courteous and very beautiful," and La Foscari with her black plume, and La Barbarigo with the little three-cornered hat over her ear, and La Mocenigo, called "the lady with the pearls," for the precious pearls with which she adorned her charming figure.

When La Rosalba painted them, they had just knotted

round their throat a velvet ribbon, stuck a patch on their satin cheek, sprinkled over their hair, their dress, and their shoulders clusters of flowers and clusters of jewels. And we have them just as they dressed themselves. They show their skin translucent like the inside of a sea-shell. They open their liquid eyes, and gaze and smile. Their delicate substance has the brightness of a petal, their frail spirit has the sheen of taffeta, the silvery gleam of lace. They are nothing but glitter and twinkle, the face of watered silk, a brilliant coating, a thin layer of cosmetic, the bloom on the surface of things. Living the ephemeral life of clouds and changing hues, lasting as long as a sunbeam or a smile, made of a breath, you might think a breath would destroy them. So it was that they delighted the time; so they appeared on thresholds of light; and so they remain.

And, just as La Rosalba gives us the heroines of the amorous moment, so does Pietro Longhi, the charming little Venetian Lancret, delighting in the lively spectacle of the street, catching in act its thousand and one interludes; lounging, trifling, loitering with head in air, rummaging in the back of shops, worming himself into summer-house intimacies, peeping into the mystery of interiors, give us the manners of this city of whims. He is a pretty painter of manners, plump and jovial; showing the rhinoceros or the giant in the *casotto*; outlining the travelling marionette-theatre; calling up the astrologer of the Piazzetta, perched up on his stage and armed with a long tube, telling fortunes into young men's ears. If on the pillar of the Doge's palace an electoral inscription, scrawled in charcoal, has chanced to survive, he picks it up as he passes; *W per piovan don Zuane padre de' poveri!* or *W per doze Pier Francesco Loredam padre de' poveri!* If, in the beautiful azure brightness of the parlour of S. Zaccaria, the nuns clothed in white are laughing at a player of bagpipes, he records it. And in the Ridotto, between the walls covered with pictures and



flanked with little card-tables, he reproduces the strolling or flaunting crowd, masks, ladies in hoop-petticoats, cavaliers with muffs, small children, puppies, a harlequin's cap, a priest's cassock, and a little water-carrier who has strayed here—who knows why?—with the two copper buckets hanging from her wooden collar, and the black satin of her *moretta*.

Smokers of long pipes, young persons with dresses of delicate shades and coloured pattens, Turks, tradesmen shouldering their balances, smart three-cornered hats, light hooded capes, sallow masks—he shows the whole little world at its employment, coming and going, running about, bowing, stirring, fluttering. He knows its quaint attitudes and rapid motions. He has caught on the wing its grimaces and its manœuvres, noted down its charming frivolities. He knows the sauciness of a small foot shod in white satin on the grey flagstones; a rosy neck set off by a flower showing through black gauze; taps with fans, winks, sly glances and furtive smiles, quick appeals and threatening forefingers; their way of wearing a cloak, lowering their mask, of throwing it back over the ear, and the irony of the two faces suddenly coupled, a Satyr and a Grace; just how the pretty creatures frisk about, sit down, get up, fling a rejoinder to an old mask bowed over his stick, tuck up their dresses, shake out their swelling petticoats, poke their faces in everywhere, and take one another aside for a charming whispered confidence; just how the cavaliers in their train pay them respects or calls, accompany their strolls, hold up their farthingales, or from behind the arm-chair, fingering an eyeglass, bend above the rounded waist.

The Venetian lady is recorded in a series of little painted interiors—getting up in the morning, seated at her dressing-table, at her mirror, spinning at her wheel, reading, dressing, undressing, tiring her hair, taking chocolate, paying a visit, receiving her tailor, her hair-dresser, her geography-master, the negro in scarlet doublet

who brings her a note, or the abbé who makes pretty speeches at her bedside, where she lies tucked up inside the frilled sheets.

One, in a buttercup dress branched with green and red, is pinning a flower in her breast. Another, in a flowered silk petticoat, posing before the glass, is fastening the points of her corset. Another, with a cloud of some white stuff on her hair, a string of pearls round her neck, a cambric handkerchief drooping from her fingertips, is being taught the minuet by an old dancing-master; the grey dress, ruffled with pink and trimmed with fur, shows her young throat; her body is bent, and the little high-heeled shoe pertly advanced; at the side, the back view of a chaperon looking on; on the floor, a foot-warmer. Another, with a rose over her ear, is singing, accompanied by a cavalier on the lute. Here is one in a swoon, her dress loosened, her lids closed, approached by Love the Physician. Another, looking small and plump in the big arm-chair, her baby hand on the dark coat of a spaniel, a plume in her powdered hair, is sitting to Longhi in person, who is seen from behind, at his easel, in his working smock. In pink kerchiefs threaded by a ribbon, in crossed fichus, in sea-green dresses, waiting-women hurry about, hold the mirror, hand the costume of brocade to their mistresses, bring the chocolate and the sweet biscuits, or put a stitch to the lace-trimmed pantalon about to be put on. Everywhere there are children. And people playing cards on a rug, people holding an extempore concert, people laughing at some jest worthy of Italian comedy. It is like so many fleeting phases of contemporary life, so many scenes in the manner of Goldoni—like a living illustration to Goldoni's drama.

And then, after all, at Venice there is Venice itself, sprung from the sea and built of the sea, framed of coral and pearl and madrepora, doubly bright since it stands

between the light above and the light beneath ; its squares, its bridges, its canals, the mirage of its views and the murmur of its crowds, the splendour of its ceremonies, the miracle of its architecture, and the magic of its setting. Here it is that Canaletto steps in, with his two pupils, Francesco Guardi and Bernardo Bellotto. From a boat, from steps, from a bridge, Antonio Canaletto, Francesco Guardi, and Bernardo Bellotto gaze at the wizard city sparkling beneath their eyes.

From the Piazza springs the red column of the Campanile. From the Piazzetta shoot up the two pillars of the Crocodile and the Lion. The Riva bestrides the Bridge of Straw and runs yonder towards the distant line of the shifting horizon. The porphyry mass of the ducal palace is fringed with white tracery against the azure of heaven. Between two strands full of palaces and churches, through a forest of steeples, domes, spires, pinnacles, the foliation and the efflorescence of marble, flows the Grand Canal, like the regal stream of history. S. Maria della Salute seems of wrought gold, set in old silver ; on the summit of the Dogana, the golden figure of Fortune flashes like fire ; S. Giorgio Maggiore in the distance takes colour like a cloud. Round their wells with carved sides, the melancholy *campi* stretch their lawns of silence, streaked with their white catalogues of names. Beneath a ship's yard appears the angle of a footway ; behind a wall, a tapering cypress stands up ; at the end of a *calle*, a mast rocks to and fro ; a triple window shows above a balcony ; a bridge spans the *rio* with slender arch ; the basket-funnel of a chimney rises towards the sky ; creviced house-sides are mirrored in the stagnant water ; the cement flakes off from a wall of ruddy brick. This opera-scenery is made alive by the crowd, which might seem part of it ; now split up into flying silhouettes, now sprinkled in graceful little knots of people, now massed in solid companies, as though ordered by the skill of a master of ceremonies, grouped

for the functions in connection with some pompous occasion, a regatta, a procession of the *Bucentaur*, the Doge visiting the churches, or the triumphal entry of an ambassador. A Callottesque populace is diffused everywhere : little personages seen from behind, coming, going, standing about ; the cock of a three-cornered hat ; a cloak being blown away ; *bocassini* of white wool conversing in a ring, amid the translucent shadow of the Piazza ; poodles gambolling on the pavement ; parents passing with a tiny child holding their hand ; boatmen bending to the oar ; porters unlading a felucca ; loungers chatting on a coil of rope ; basket-makers working in the shadow of a tent ; or else the hubbub of a market on the Riva, or the Doge distributing his *oselle* on the Piazza, or the barges of the ambassador Clergi moored to the Palace steps ; or Pope Pius VI., perched on a platform, blessing the people opposite the school of S. Marco.

And here again is the glory of the light ; skies of dull silver, dappled grey clouds, gleams of yellow or rosy gold, smiling somewhere, on the back of a sail, on a rounded dome, on the façade of a palazzo ; and the amber lights mirrored in the water, and the pools of sunlight falling on it, and the opal mists rising from it, and the trailing vapours floating round like wisps of gold or shreds of cotton-wool—the whole spectacle with its changing hues and its brightness, every caress of the soft and kindly daylight, every kiss the transparent and liquid atmosphere gives to that poem whose stanzas are of marble. See the charming blot the red cloak yonder makes against the ashen-yellow of the wall—that silver-beaked gondola against the blue-grey water of the canal, that square white flag against the pearly horizon ! Canaletto, Bellotto, and Guardi look, and tell all they see.

They hardly add anything to these things. What can be added ? Venice is enough for the painter. Itself a work of art, it is infinite ; always alike and always

different ; incessantly varying, changing its tones, colouring and losing colour, lighting up and dying down, ever renewing its shapes. And each of the three gives expression to it according to his genius, Canaletto with more precision, Bellotto more minutely, Guardi with greater freedom.

Francesco Guardi is exquisite. He is all intelligence to the tips of his finger-nails ; full of readiness, daring, and abounding fancy. Light and nimble, he shows such independence that he composes the landscape afresh ; improvises with a smile, and diffuses himself in clever touches, rapid jottings, little springs of merriment and sudden delight. Look at the fine quality of the silvered greys of his skies, and, through all these translucent tints, the little dash of sobriety and grace he throws in with his supple and sure touch ; the light parts washed in, a tiny point of light, an accentuated colour, the bright red of a cloak, or the yellow sheen of a boatman's tunic. It is the utmost pitch of skill, and as modern as to-day. Francesco Guardi began a new era.

Thus did these lesser masters, one in oils, one in gums, another in water-colour, another in pastel, another in sepia, another in Indian ink, another in miniatures on vellum, set themselves the fascinating task of describing Venice.

We must add the vignettists. For Venice, where it snows scraps of white paper, and where loose sheets drift in the wind, consumes vast numbers of vignettes. They are wanted everywhere : on visiting-cards, which are set off by a little engraving ; on paper fans, adorned with grotesques ; on the *mode* and *francesine* with which chamber-walls are hung ; for the frontispiece of the Lovers' Calendar sold in a silk case ; for the margins of the *raccolta* in its gold-flowered dress ; for the leaves of the Art-Book, a marvel of elegance and good taste, which Zatta and Pasquali and Albrizzi continue to print in the



city of the Aldi. So that there is quite a constellation at work of pretty craftsmen of the graving-tool, coming from the workshops of Bassano or Belluno, working for Remondini, in request abroad. Vying with each other in dexterous contrivances, in clever tricks with the tool, in vibrant and luminous yellows, these successors of Marc Antonio and contemporaries of Piranesi scatter far and wide their ingenious vignettes. And their tale is again of Venice. Their marginal decorations draw inspiration from the mouldings of the wood-carver; their tailpieces recall the ornamentation of Venetian furniture; their initials enclose in the space of a thumb-nail the angle of a landscape or a garden. Their delicate etchings reproduce so many scenes of everyday life.

And so it is that, thanks to all these men, the Venice of the time sparkles before our eyes.

And then we should like to know the painters too in their ways and manner of life; to surprise Tiepolo in his villa of Zianigo, which, with his two sons Domenico and Lorenzo, he loves to adorn with myths, masquerades, and Venetian scenes; to visit Canaletto in his house of S. Lio, with his train of pupils; to follow La Rosalba to the court of Vienna, and Bellotto to the court of the fantastical Augustus III.; to see Pietro Longhi directing his Academy of Fine Arts under the roof of the Pisani; to hear Guardi, on the first floor of his house of La Madonnetta, giving lessons to Casanova's brother; or his sister, Cecilia, who became the wife of Tiepolo, dictating her will: "I leave to my daughter all my chemises, my new dress, and the dark one with the yellow bands. . . ." There is so much that we should like to know.

They compose a little family of artists closely bound together. They are connected by all kinds of ties, of kinship, of interest, and of pursuits. They reveal their secrets to their sons, and found a line of painters. They work for lords, for travelling amateurs, for collectors,

who sometimes are inclined to rob them, like Smith the English consul. They are very ready to go abroad in search of fortune; and afterwards they come home again. When they have completed a canvas, they exhibit it in the Merceria or at the fair of the Sensà; and the Gazettes burst out into applause.

The interior of Rosalba Carriera's house is delightful. It is off the Grand Canal, in the Calle di Cà Cent'anni, the street in which Goldoni was born. Here is her mother, the old Venetian woman, prudent yet playful, very fond of persegata and gingerbread; her two sisters—Angela, who married the painter Antonio Pellegrini and calls him her “puppet,” and Giovanina, who remained a spinster and is called La Neneta. It is a cheerful circle, honest and industrious; no idlers and libertines, but good books, old friends, a spinet, a violin, and the magical colours of the pencil. No dust, but pretty objects such as a lapis-lazuli box, silver candlesticks with their snuffers, and on the wall a little painting, a present from Watteau. They are all at work: Angela and Neneta help their sister, preparing her grounds, putting on them the first tints, covering them with the light coat, from which the luminous image will spring out. Rosalba, whom the family call “the little one”—*la putela*—is at her easel, painting. Or she is reading a Latin book, or trying her hand at simple rhymes, or accompanying on her harpsichord the Duke of Mecklenburg's viola, or receiving a visit from the Elector of Saxony in a red coat, or making answer to her French friends who put her on a throne—Crozat, Mariette, Vleugels, Marigny, and the Abbé de Mayroulle. She is merry, and likes to stroll about and converse and go into company. Sometimes she amuses herself with a game of cards. She is quite small, and tries to increase her height “by dint of shoe-heel”; she is ugly, and seems not to care about appearing pretty. In the evening, when work is over, the whole family gather under the lamp; and, as the

industrious Neneta is rather tired, having got up at dawn, been to church, visited her poor, cut out dresses for the masquerade, and busied herself indoors with household affairs, accounts, clothes, and linen, she is dreadfully sleepy, and goes off into a doze. They all laugh at her, and Antonio Pellegrini sketches lively caricatures of the sleeper. She notices it and is furious, springs up, runs to the kitchen to dose herself with a drop of coffee left over, comes back, sits down resolved not to sleep any more, and promptly goes off again. The laughter is redoubled, the jokes begin afresh, until Neneta is disarmed and laughs as heartily as the rest. That is the interior of La Rosalba.

And it may well be that this famous daughter of Venice, who showed such a sweet placidity of mind, and loved to diffuse around her such lively merriment, and never hated anybody or anything in the world—except the rain, and the bores, and her break-neck *ruelle*, and Canons in the choir muttering and taking snuff between two psalms—it may well be that Rosalba Carriera gives a fair idea of these lesser masters of Venice—sparing of confidences about themselves—of their customs, their methods, their pleasures, their temperament, and their character.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE VENETIAN THEATRE AND ITALIAN COMEDY

THE Venetians with their poetic, pleasure-loving character could hardly have existed without the charm and glamour of fiction. It is true that footlights, curtains, and a double bass were sufficient to create the world of wonders which they loved. But they would have died if altogether deprived of their theatrical illusions.

In the eighteenth century, Paris had three theatres. Omitting occasional theatres, stages in palaces, open-air theatres in the *piazze*, and travelling theatres for mario-nettes, Venice had seven, all permanent and bearing the names of their parish saints, all open during the whole season of masquerades, and giving performances every single evening. Take, for instance, the evening of January 21, 1765. *Didone abbandonata* was performed at the S. Benedetto, *l'Amor in ballo* at the S. Mosé, *Il rico insidiato* at the S. Salvatore, *Semiramide* at the S. Cassiano, *Brighella disertore disperato sequace della Magia d'Archelaüsse* at the S. Crisostomo, *La Favola dell' Uccellin belverde* at the S. Angelo, and at the S. Samuele that beautiful and amusing comedy the *Cavaliere di Ripafratta, o sia il Marchese di Forlinpopoli*. They let no grass grow in these shrines of frivolity ; they almost lived in them, so that nearly every house was to let. From the red-capped boatman, who prided himself on his taste in comedy, to the patrician in his toga, whose hobby was the management of theatres, all found their way in. They were at home there, even more than in church. They were hardly inside before they seemed to be in possession of the place. They enjoyed being together,

after the solitary business of the day. In the absence of known events, they filled the silences of history with imaginary inventions of their poets, they gave their whole hearts to the play of imaginary emotions ; they filled the empty spaces of their souls and lives with happy illusions ; they liked the frenzy which was aroused in them by the *roulades* of a singer, the contortions of an acrobat, the pleantries of a buffoon. They found the door of a theatre as irresistible as a café.

Drama is the literature of those who do not read. It was pre-eminently the literature of Venice, to whose spirit it was most akin. It was her glory, her natural mode of expression, her standard of literary judgment. From Ruzzante to Goldoni it spread her fame throughout Italy. A too stern reality wearied the old artistic race ; the drama was their liberating dream, their indigenous diversion. It was the prevailing *genre* ; every one attempted it, every one was familiar with it, the most humble critic formed a theory of it and supported an opinion. The name alone of an actress could draw sparks and flame from a languishing conversation. A new play was a public event ; its echoes spread even to the ferries. The engagement of a dancing-girl was an affair of State ; it filled the portfolios of the Council of Ten, and embarrassed a number of embassies. Any plots or factions that disturbed the State were purely theatrical. The rivalry of the priest Chiara and the lawyer Goldoni gave birth to two parties, divided the city into two camps, "armed one against another, lords and ladies, citizens and their wives, the poor, the artisans, the gondoliers, the cultured courtesans." No literary polemic ever raised a greater stir, or wasted more paper.

The horizon of the Venetians seemed to be bounded by footlights, stage scenery, and a prompter's box. The air of deserted passages was heavy with the damp odour of worn velvet and orange-peel, exhaled from theatre halls. The atmosphere was mingled with the bitter



floating dust which rose from their "boards," and "burnt and killed like gunpowder." Of all this busy hurrying population there was scarcely a person who had not some connection with the stage, as lamp-lighter or ticket-collector, as box-attendant or copyist of music, as chorus girl or her dressmaker, her music-master, her stage-manager, her glover, her hosier, her confessor, her hairdresser, her protector. They were poets or prompters, "crowds" or machinists, pages or painters or first haut-boys. They sang in Italian opera or acted in pantomime, or played the Wit, the Moor, the late Roman, or the capricious courtier in a ballet. Take, for instance, a *comédienne*; she knows more about love than Ovid ever wrote. Take her mother or her brother. He is paid sixpence a day to do the policeman, or the robber, or the devil, and to carry a lantern in front of the princess, his sister, when she returns from the "wings" to the kitchen to change her clothes. The chariot of Comedy had stopped for good at Venice; the shafts rose empty in the air.

At every corner of this fantastic city there stood out a group of wandering comedians. At one a poet reads his compositions to some actresses; they knit stockings while they listen. At another some singers loll about on chairs and fan themselves with their music, while they practise their songs. Elsewhere an artiste converses with her patron, while her hairdresser plays the spy; her husband has gone shopping with a basket on his arm. The Senator Malipiero surprises Teresa Imer and Casanova in too intimate conversation, and rains showers of blows upon them. Carlo Gozzi is on his way to Teresa Ricci to present the homage of a poet; her husband, with holes in his stockings, sleeps peacefully through the long discourse. A girl of eighteen is practising her dance on the Piazza in the clear moonlight. A boat-load of comedians bears the young Goldoni over the blue waters of the Adriatic. A troupe of opera-singers is waiting on the

quay at S. Mosé to embark at break of day. The mother of a singer is drawing the lottery, which she has organised to meet the needs of her daughter.

All things—past, present, and future—were exploited for the drama. They ransacked the antiquities of Greece and Rome, myth and legend, the East, the dwellings of the fairies, the “cloak and sword” drama of Spain, contemporary stories of adventure, even old and innocent nursery tales. Fielding’s *Tom Jones* and Marivaux’s *Marianne*, Molière’s *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the *Peruvian Letters* of Mme. de Graffigny and the *Amazons* of Mme. du Bocage, Richardson’s *Pamela* and Le Sage’s *Gil Blas*, Fieux de Monhy’s *Paysanne Parvenue* and Virgil’s *Æneid*—all are transported to the stage. From the *Æneid* alone Abbé Chiari drew three plays. They made Æneas a Captain Fracasse, Menelaus an amorous Pantaloon, Helen a Venetian gossip. They showed Cupid scattering flowers upon the tables, Aphrodite in her chariot of clouds, peasants’ raids, pitched battles, ships burning, gods flying, stars shooting, children hidden in a tomb, the shades of the dead, and even the whole kingdom of the shades. Everything from Tirso de Molina to Boursault, to Regnard, to Klopstock, was marked down, copied, stolen, adapted, or simply translated. With this material they manufactured indifferently the libretti of *opéra-bouffe* and of Grand Opera, masques and comedies of character, tragedies and tragi-comedies, fairy-plays, ballets, and melodrama. Novelty was the essential thing. Hence Count Alessandro Pepoli composed a *Ladislás*, which was neither comedy nor tragedy but a “physedy” or song of nature, with sun-rises and moon-rises, with lofty towers, precipitous mountains, battles, and habitable caves. The second essential was to produce something full of marvels. They wanted men carried on devil-back through the air, set-pieces of fireworks, pilgrims’ staves, daggers, poisons, prisons, slaughtered bears, lofty pavilions, earthquakes. Accord-

ing to Marcello a dramatic poet was dressed in cork, adorned with metaphors, translations, and hyperboles, and a sword in a bearskin sheath.

At Venice the end of the eighteenth century was marked by the triumph of Italian Comedy. Its birth-place is unknown, and its origin is shrouded perhaps in the mists of prehistoric times. Its torch may have been kindled at the fires of the ancient Oscan civilisation ; or it may have been handed down from the culture of Magna Græcia or from some other old uncertain source. Oscan games and Atellan farce were perhaps its cradle, Polichinello the ancient Maccus, the Zannis nothing but the Latin Sanniones. Its flowing robes and living outlines may be directly derived from the pantomimists and ballet-dancers, actors and clowns, whom lust and license created to amuse the cross-roads with their wine-stained cheeks and strange grimaces. But in the midst of so great obscurity, this much at least is certain. The Italian Comedy *dell'arte*, the Italian Comedy of improvisation, of masks, of plots and incidents, developed along parallel lines with the Italian Comedy written in the study. It died with the *ancien régime*. If the written comedy presupposes an environment of cultured ease, a villa garden or a palace court, the comedy which is Italian Comedy *par excellence* is the spontaneous growth of the Piazza. In fact, to set it in its proper frame, we must reconstruct for ourselves an Italian fair with all its wild excitement, such as Callot loved to paint.

A gibbet was outlined against the sky. Strings of onions hung from pedlars' stalls. Boys and dogs and hedge-priests, servants and wandering merchants mixed upon the stage. Cripples of every kind drawled out their prayers. Men in plumed hats stood, hand in pocket, spitting upon the ground ; few had the good taste to step aside. There were vendors of rat poison, men who sold mirrors to light fires with from the sun, showmen of

strange terrifying monsters, men who ate cloth, or vomited fire, or bathed their faces in molten lead. There were conjurers who pretended to cut off noses with a knife, or extracted ten yards of rope from their own mouths, or caused cards to be found in other people's hands. There were men who blew into boxes till their faces were the colour of some brigand's, and others made them eat dung disguised as dainties. In the glare and hubbub of these orgies, to the accompaniment of blows given by insulted serving-girls, amid cries and stinks, among cheats and swindlers, that strange, monstrous, savage growth burst forth, with the gestures of an artist, and the soul of a child.

Starting from some such fair of the Impruneta, Italian Comedy spread through all the land. A yoke of oxen dragged round its chariot with its canvas awning. Beneath the canvas Isabella suckled her child. At each rise in the road the actors got down and pushed against the wheels. They knew chance resting-places and strange hostelries, all the hazards of the great roads. They forded rivers and climbed mountains; they slept in barns or with the stars for their roof. They saw the sky blaze at midnight with arquebus-shots and the village children run after them with shouts. They passed from hamlet to hamlet, from experience to experience, from success to success. And then the poor rope-dancers of yore, the thin vagabonds with the disjointed bodies, the wasted, wandering sons of mud and night, who wiped their noses with their fingers and knelt in the dust of the road at the tinkling of the Angelus, found the great gates of palaces opened to them, and entered in. For did not Catherine de Medici laugh at their farces with all her soul, like any common woman? Were not diplomatic negotiations commenced to obtain a Scaramouche or a Lelia? Princes and princesses, even kings, gave them rides in their carriages. Marie de Medici held Harlequin's son at the font. Tasso sat beside Isabella

at the table of Cardinal Aldobrandini. Louis XIII. appointed Beltrami to his guard of honour. The King of Poland made Mezzetino keeper of his privy purse, and the Emperor Matthias made Fritelino a noble. The cities of Italy pealed their bells and proclaimed tournaments in honour of Vincenza Armani of Venice. The magistrates of Lyon sent their mace-bearers and their banners to the funeral of Isabella Andreini of Padua. Together with his dog, his cat, his monkey, and his parrot, Scaramouche had the *entrée* to the Louvre. One day he found the Dauphin in tears, and amused him so well with his grimaces that the Roi-Soleil in swaddling clothes suffered himself to be nursed by his visitor.

We gather up all that remains of this spectacle. We turn over the compliments of poets and the notices of journalists. We read the biographies of these illustrious comedians. We consult the poor scenarios, thin and fragile as the skeletons of leaves. We look at Callot's flying company of dancers or at Watteau's masquerades. And we try to picture to ourselves this mad, enthralling thing, which was born, and mounted to the skies, ravished a whole world, and charmed a whole era, which is dead now—so definitely dead, that it has left no memorial of itself but the reflection of its brilliance and the echo of its fame.

First and foremost we find the old men, Pantaloon of Venice and the Doctor of Bologna, two toothless, cheese-paring, doddering old misers, who sneezed and spat and belched, and in spite of their baldness, catarrh, and crutches, were always rubbing young men up the wrong way. Next came the two servants of Bologna, Harlequin and Brighella, with their arms round each other's necks, the incarnations of two ideals of domestic life; the one a knave and light of wit, the other a heavy simpleton; the one keen-eyed as a hawk, the other perpetually moon-struck. Brighella was always letting plates fall, knocking himself against walls, falling flat on his back on the



stairs. Harlequin was as sharp as steel, all knavery, craftiness, elasticity. Then, in the train of these four original types, come various imitations of them, degenerate copies and stupid grafts on the old trunk—valets, peasants, sharpers, pedants, cowards, wastrels of all sorts, idiots of every kind, gluttons and simpletons, monsters and masqueraders. There was Mezzetino and Trufaldino, Trivetino and Scaramouche, Paillasse and Cavicchio, Burattino and Pasquariello, Pierrot all in white, Scaramouche all in black, Tartaglia the stammerer, Franca-trippa the glutton, Coviello who was leaps and jests and songs and nothing more. Naples produced Polichinello and Sienna produced Cassandro, Niccolo Barbieri invented Beltrami, Tiberio Furelli Scaramouche, Guiseppe Giaratone Pierrot, and Domenico Biancolelli turned the dull farm-boy of Bergamo into Harlequin; “that sort of half finished man,” “that great child with the agility and gentleness of a kitten,” “that mixture of ignorance, naiveté, wit, stupidity, and grace” which Marmontel admired. Each had his own character and his own costume, his dialect and his country, his special attributes and disfigurations. Each was sculptured large as life on the subject-matter of Laughter. With them were the lovers with their tenderness and youth and beauty, who talked Tuscan and copied the latest manners. Horace and Coraline, Isabella and Leander, Cintio and Flaminia, Lelio and the exquisite Sylvia, all were there. And after them came the clever, resourceful host of soubrettes—Zerbinetta, Francesquina, Diamantina, and Columbine. And threading his way through them all, erect to his full height, his moustache-ends turned up, his great plume waving in the air, and his hand on the handle of a rapier, on which a spider’s web lay rotting, there was Captain Spaventa *alias* Aspromonte, Rinoce-ronte, Furibimbombo, Leonontrone Arcitonotonantre Sbaronne, Escarabombardon de la Papirotonda. He could not wear a shirt because his hair bristled so with

rage, and would have made it as full of holes as a sieve. He could only eat three meats, Jews and Turks and Lutherans. He had sent his valet to pay his compliments to the grand Sophti. He had saved the world from the Deluge, he had fought against the stars, he had lain with Death in the nether world, and had made two hundred girls mothers in one night. But if Pantaloon but put his hand to his pistol, the Captain took to his legs as fast as he could ; and on lonely roads at night he almost frightened himself to death.

Such were comic, delightful characters that appeared against the scenery of painted canvas. Torn ruffs and mantles mingled with white cloaks and jackets, with jewels and ribands ; the Captain's sword with Harlequin's club, the woollen cap of Pantaloon with the red-plumed bonnet of Coviello, Pierrot in his moon-white suit, Horace in his petticoat of gold, Scaramouche and his guitar, the Doctor and his wine-stains, Tartaglia in his spectacles, all were there, strange, adorable turns in the old rambling poem.

They were all as chock-full of malice as of wit. Mimes, acrobats, dancers, musicians, comedians, all at once, they were also poets, and composed their own piece. They strained their fancy to the utmost in inventing it, and improvised it on the spot as their turn came and the inspiration took them. They were not willing, like silly school-boys, to recite only what they had learnt from a master, nor to be mere echoes, unable to speak for themselves without another having spoken before them. They did not draw themselves up in a line before the foot-lights, five or six in a row, like figures in a bas-relief, and wait their turn to present their tricks. Rather they were full of impatience, imagination, devilry. They were the great artists of Laughter, the sowers of the golden grain of Gaiety, the servants of the Unforeseen, the kings of Inspiration. They had only to receive a scenario, which some one had scribbled on his knee, to meet their

stage-manager in the morning to arrange the outlines of the plot, and to hang the paper within easy reach of the wings; the rest they could invent themselves. Familiarity with the stage and their profession and their art had taught them a whole bundle of tricks and quips. They had a store of proverbs, sallies, charades, riddles, recitations, cock-and-bull stories, and songs jumbled together in their heads. They knew all sorts of metaphors, similes, repetitions, antitheses, cacophonies, hyperboles, tropes, and pleasant figures; and besides they had volumes of tirades, which they had learnt by heart, of soliloquies, exclamations of despair, sallies, conceits of happy love, or jealousy, or prayer, or contempt, or friendship, or admiration, always on the tips of their tongues, ready to utter when they were out of breath. They raised their scaffolding high into the air, and then gave themselves up to their own fertile genius and their amazing caprice. They obeyed all the intemperance and extravagance of their humours. They became nothing but retorts, sallies, conceits, paradoxes, witticisms, mental somersaults. They seized opportunity by the forelock, and turned the least accident to profit. They drew inspiration from the time, the place, the colour of the sky, or the topic of the day, and established a current between their audience and themselves out of which the mad farce arose, the joint product of them all. It varied at each representation, seemed different every evening, with all the spirit and warmth and alertness of spontaneous creation, a brilliant ephemeral creature born of the moment and for the moment.

Their pieces went with the speed of lightning and the noise of Pandemonium. The house was consumed with shrieks of laughter, like the tumult of a whirlwind. It was all lovers' intrigue, complicated by disguises, kidnappings, unexpected returns, impersonations and supposititious infants. Retorts, misunderstandings, character-sketches, jests, caricatures, blows and kicks were their

stock-in-trade. They groped about in the dark and ran into one another and fell down. They mutilated words. They put out their tongues, rolled their eyes, made grimaces. They boxed their ears with their feet. They sang songs and recited, and poured forth proverbs, quotations, precedents. There were scenes of tumult and uproar and inexpressible confusion, in which they were knocked down and got up again, supporting themselves as they could, tripped each other up, got in each other's way, and ran off in the midst of the clatter. They passed the word round, for instance, to make Pantaloon believe that his breath smelt. Pantaloon blows his horn from the window to proclaim the opening of the chase. Gratiano appears holding a cock, Burattino with a monkey on a chain, and a child on the back of a bear is leading a lion. Harlequin, armed with a blacksmith's tools, draws four of Pantaloon's soundest teeth. He waits on Don Juan at table and wipes the plates on the seat of his breeches before he hands them, or produces his cap, full of cherries, from the same place, and cracks the stones with his teeth and pretends to spit them on the ground. He keeps hissing some tune through his lips or pursues a fly in the air and catches it. He counts his coat-buttons, saying, "She loves me, she loves me not, she loves me." There is only one plate of macaroni between three of them, and they eat it in floods of tears. Burattino sits on the ground with a basket of provisions. Two robbers come up and instal themselves, one on each side of him. The first tells him that he comes from the land of Cockaigne, and warns him that it is a nest of thieves, while the second is vigorously attacking the basket. Then they go off, after many bows, and Burattino sets about opening his basket and he finds nothing in it, and bursts into sobs. In the middle of a fête Pantaloon's young wife, Isabella, whispers a word or two into his ear. He escorts her with every sort of attention to the gardener's lodge. He waits at



the door and keeps watch, drives away the passers-by, or stops the way and signs to them to keep silent. At last Isabella comes out again, a little out of breath. Pantaloön congratulates her, and wipes her forehead with his handkerchief, and begs her always to rely on him in similar circumstances. A few scenes later he learns that Horace was concealed in the lodge, and that the gardener found his bed in disorder. Tartaglia hides in a truss of hay when he hears a cock crow. Wood and fire, a caldron and some swaddling clothes, are brought on to help a woman in child-birth. Mistresses come to blows, and servants tear their hair out. Pandolph throws a saucepan at Valerio's head. Ghosts appear, and princesses, bound naked to a rock. Serenaders play their guitars beneath the balconies. With no properties at all, or with a few, such as a stick, a live cat, or a cock, two fires and their smoke, four costumes for wits, a dirty shirt for the Captain, a plate of figs, plenty of lanterns, a big tree to sit in, a fine ship, and beautiful nymphs' costumes, a chamber-pot full of wine, or even an earthquake, they opened the golden gates of Fantasy. Dreams were grafted on mistakes, marvels on absurdities. Pirouettes, repartees, music, dances, jests, acrobatic feats, grimaces and dumb-show, pantomime and drama, peals of laughter and peals of thunder followed in quick succession. They ran, jumped, turned somersaults, and kicked up their heels, and the piece went like lightning—crackled, and sparkled, and glowed, and blazed, and then died away and disappeared. Their whole bodies moved at once. Their hands and fingers, their gestures, almost seemed to speak. Their extravagant fancy broke loose before an audience and burst into fire and soared into the sky, a marvel of balance. Explosions of wild laughter followed, and wild confusion, and a medley of caricatures, dreams, buffooneries, scurrility, poetry, and love. But the fireworks gave way to the darkness of the night. They had climbed up to heaven and built their palaces



of light, and filled its expanse with rockets and stars and rays. Of all their fairy splendour nothing remained but the pitiful carcass, a few smouldering sticks and a few scraps of paper with blackened wire. "Look," said Garrick, the English actor, "look at the character and expression in Carlino's back." But Carlino is dead, and we shall nevermore see his back.

Italian Comedy was a strictly national product, the brilliant natural flower of the Italian genius. Unequalled and unsurpassed, it fell by a strange fate. It was already full-grown when elsewhere Comedy was still prattling like a child. Later, when a comic art arose with fixed and academic rules, Italian Comedy remained pure fancy unrestrained. It seemed what in truth it was—something unique in the world. Hence in the sixteenth century we find that Drusiano took it to the England of Elizabeth, Ganassa to the Spain of Philip II., the companies of Gelosi and Fedeli to the France of Charles IX. In the seventeenth century it filled the high roads of Europe with its caravans. It roused laughter amid the din of wars, and avenged Italy on her oppressors by the bragging of the Captain. In the eighteenth century, from 1716 onwards, it was established permanently at Paris, possessing a house and clients and patrons of its own. Together with Italian music it was henceforth the ornament of every Court, the mainstay of every fête, the classic diversion of the old régime. But Venice had been the birthplace of Pantaloon, and the home of that incredible Andrea Calmo, who numbered Tintoretto and Aretino and Michael Angelo among his friends. She had shunned tragedy as the plague, and disregarded the written comedy with its odour of the lamp and its reminiscences of Latin. She had considered the theatre neither as a school for teachers nor as a lecture-room for reformers, but as a place of amusement. Therefore it was at Venice that Italian comedy triumphed. It was seen there in its most lively and exhilarating moods, and

won there its most unrestrained applause, and at the end of the eighteenth century, with Carlo Gozzi and with Darbès, Zacchi, Fiorilli, and Zannoni, the incomparable four, it was there that it uttered its latest joke.

The shadow of death hung over Italian Comedy. Reduced to a few traditional and unchanging characters, it revolved around two or three persons as conventional and artificial and effete as their prototypes, the Senes or Servi or Miles Gloriosus of the ancient drama. It had renounced its excursions into the world of marvels, and confined itself to the Piazza and its everlasting arcades and windows and houses. Lovers' intrigue was its staple. Manners and characters were alike neglected. It intruded into men's souls as little as into their houses, and utterly ignored all the multiplicity and diversity and instability of life.

Besides, it depended entirely on the labours of its actors. There were prodigies among them, without doubt, true sons of Italy, where, if Cyrano de Bergerac was right, all were born actors. There had been men of fancy and inspiration, as lively as quicksilver, all gesture and caprice. But, unluckily, they were dead.

"An Italian actor," wrote the flute-player Evariste Gherardi, "is a man of character, with more imagination than memory. He can compose his part on the spot, and play up to another on the stage. He accommodates his words and actions so well to his comrades, and performs so unhesitatingly whatever the other desires, that every one thinks it was all arranged before." This "*naturæ laborantis opus*," as Columbine expressed it in the *Chinois* of Regnard and Dufresny, was sometimes accomplished. More often no miracle was needed to attain the result. For every four or five excellent actors there was a whole host of spouting nonentities, and ill-acted parts, inexperienced boys and girls, old men and women only fit to beg at street-corners, dunces who could neither read nor write. Casanova's Harlequin was

dead, and Francesco Andreini, who knew six languages, and Domenico, whom the President du Harlay met in St. Victor's library at Paris, and found so full of modesty and learning that he could not help embracing him on the spot. Gone, too, were Scaramouche, the master of Molière and the pupil of Nature; Carlino, praised by Grimm for his agility and grace; Smeraldina, whom Goethe admired for the liveliness, good-humour, and intelligence of his face; Coralina, brought to Paris by Jean-Jacques; and Sylvia. "Of ten who try to act," said Niccolo Barbieri, "nine are failures," and on these nine, who composed rather than interpreted it, the success of the piece depended. Since they could not pretend to the highest comedy, they had fallen to the lowest. Unequal to flights of fancy, they crawled along the gutter, and tried to make up for their lack of intelligence by the foolishness of their actions. They returned with a rush to the rope-dancing of their prototypes, and brought back to the stage all the buffoonery and clownish tricks and trivial amusements of the fairs from which they sprang. Thanks to them, Italian Comedy lost its pre-eminence, and became every day more childishly extravagant and unreal. It traded on five or six situations, already worn to death, and depended for its humour on a few score witticisms which had passed from almanack to almanack. "Before Harlequin had opened his mouth you knew what he was going to say." At last people began to grow tired of these quips and jests and anecdotes. Besides, the anecdotes were not always seasoned with Attic salt, and some of the jests left a bad taste in the mouth. Women discussed their love affairs, and girls begged their lovers to marry them, as their child might be born at any moment. Flavio and Isabella were not ashamed to appear in their night-gowns. Burattino came on with a chamber-pot in his hand. Harlequin was sick on the stage. They even performed mock circumcisions. "I can safely assert," said Des Lauriers,

the actor, "that the most chaste Italian comedy is a hundred times more dissolute in word and action than any of our own." "All the comedies I saw at Venice," wrote Addison, "were poor and low and crude, and much more dissolute even than our own." The English traveller, Maihows, said he had never heard such disgusting nonsense in his life. Likewise Moratin: "Their farces are incredibly scandalous. Nothing like them appears in any other European theatre." Président de Brosses had seen many of their performances during his tour in Italy, and retained a lively impression of "their pointless buffoonery and license." "They have neither head nor tail, neither manners nor character, nor truth to life."

In the eighteenth century, 300 years after its first appearance, the sources of Italian comedy seemed to have run dry. It needed the infusion of fresh blood in its veins, if it was to prolong its existence. It had survived in France because it had undergone a complete change, equivalent to a new birth. It had been purified by men of art and genius, from Marivaux to Regnard. Similarly in Italy, it could only avoid extinction by being born again.

It was at this moment that Goldoni appeared upon the scene.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE COMEDY OF GOLDONI

CARLO GOLDONI was born at Venice on the 25th of February, 1707. The scene of his birth was a large and beautiful mansion in the parish of St. Thomas at the corner of the Cà Cent' Anni, between the Ponte dei Nomboli and the Ponte della Donna Onesta.

"On my first appearance in the world," he wrote, "I announced my presence by no cry." He added that this placidity seemed an earnest of a quiet disposition which had never played him false. He was right; for he was born happy, with a simple, imperturbable character. From the first he was at peace with the world, and nothing could change his unalterable good-humour, not even the ups and downs of a most adventurous life. He has told the story of that life in three volumes of memoirs, written in French, and published in Paris—memoirs which Gibbon found as amusing as his plays. His life is like a comedy, or rather like one of his own comedies, honest and full of joy, optimistic and moral. The scenes are exquisitely balanced, everything falls into its proper place, and everything ends for the best in this best of all possible worlds. Merely to be alive is the great amusement.

His life was full of change from his earliest childhood, which he spent in Venice, amid the comforts of the great bourgeois house, in the company of his pleasure-loving grandfather and his stern father, and his indulgent mother, all acquiescence and forgiveness, through his manhood of tumult and laughter and abundance down to his obscure and pitiful death in the



slums, one might say in the wings, at Paris in the full fury of the Revolution.

From his father, as he asserted, he inherited a roving disposition. He was nine years old when he left Venice for the first time to go and study the classics with the Jesuits of Perugia. Thenceforth he was always on the move. He was destined to pass through all the centres of eighteenth-century Italy, with all their comedy and variety. He studied philosophy at Rimini, accompanied his father (who had turned doctor) to Chioggia, became the fourth clerk of his uncle, the Procurator Indric at Venice, wore the collar of English cloth while he read for Orders at the Pope's College at Pavia, thought of becoming a monk at Modena, and filled the office of Coadjutor to the Criminal Chancellor at Feltre. When he was twenty-five, he amused himself by taking the degree of Doctor *in utroque jure* at Padua, after passing his night in play. One would have thought his wanderings at an end when he set up in Venice as a barrister, with a profession and a permanent position; but no, he moved off as lightly as ever. We find him again in the midst of projects and escapades, the slave of Fortune's every turn, and of every passing fancy. Wandering gaily and cheerfully as ever, he passed from Milan to Verona, to Genoa, to Rimini, to Florence, to Pisa, to Venice, to the neighbourhood of Venice, until in 1748 he again established himself there, no longer as a barrister, but as poet of the Medebac Company, and official purveyor to the theatre of S. Angelo. This lasted twelve years. Twelve years later he set out again, and wandered not only to a new city but to a new country. He went to settle in Paris, knowing nothing of its character or manners, or even of its language, having everything to learn afresh. The prospect did not trouble him at all. He was only fifty-three.

During these first forty years he was the plaything of all the winds of Heaven. He practised every pro-

fession, and experienced every fortune. He became in turns a member of the University, a candidate for Orders, a Law student, Coadjutor of the Criminal Chancellor, Clerk of the Procurator, Barrister, Secretary to the Venetian Resident at Milan, Consul of the Republic of Genoa at Venice, Bohemian poet, comic writer, and had all but become a monk. He had composed the most moving of sermons; the audience had wept and spat, and rocked upon their chairs; he had compiled an almanack, *Past Experience as Prophet of the Future*, a critical almanack for the year 1732. He had pleaded in support of a right of water, he had entered houses of all kinds, from the castle of Count Lantieri, where the guests were regaled with a wine called *Faiseur des enfants*, to a place of ill-fame, to which his fellow-curates brought him, and where he jumped out of the window to escape temptation. He had mixed with all sorts of people—men of learning like Muratori, Zeno and Abbé Lami, extemporary poets like the Chevalier Perfetti, charlatans like the Anonyme, diplomats, persons of quality, ladies of pleasure, scribblers, churchmen, cheats, and the wife of Professor Lauzio, who had the *goitre*. He had passed through every adventure. At Desenzano the inn was full, and he shared his bedroom with a pretty Venetian girl, his companion on the voyage, in the perfect ingenuousness of his heart. On the steamer he was relieved of his purse by a rascally monk, the possessor of a portion of the lace from the stays of the Holy Virgin. At Chioggia he felt the pulses of drunken girls as his father's assistant on his doctor's rounds. At Feltre he examined a man who had been given the *estrapade*; at Udine he had an innocent intrigue with the daughter of a vendor of lemonade. He had been deceived by a sham captain of Ragusa, and robbed of £6000 by the pale son of a Paduan butcher. He had been fleeced by the comic actress Passalacqua, who pretended an almost superhuman passion for him, and helped an actor to deceive him; by a Lady Superior

of a convent, by a spinster of uncertain age, by an old servant, by a Venetian adventuress—in short, by every woman. He wanted to marry, but reflecting that the charming person whom he loved might become as ugly as her elder sister was already, and foreseeing his disgust, he had given her up. He was married once and for all at Genoa to a pretty young girl, whom he saw one day upon a balcony. He saluted her on the spot with the utmost tenderness, and she answered him with modesty. He went off to find her father, took him to a café, offered him some theatre tickets, and practically concluded the bargain at one sitting. The night of his marriage he got the small-pox. “Patience,” he said; “luckily it was not dangerous, and I have not become uglier than I was before.” He had travelled much, and observed much, and harvested an unfailing store of scenes and situations and comic events. He had read little, and reflected not at all, and he had enjoyed it with all his soul.

In childhood he had been subject to hypochondriac vapours. In an hour of depression he had thought, as a young man might, of taking Orders for good, but he found a means of escape from this ill-humour. Dr. Baronio told him to consider his malady as a child coming to attack him with a naked sword. “He won’t hurt you if you defend yourself, but if you leave your breast unguarded, the child will kill you.” Goldoni set to work to defend himself, and the deceitful child of chagrin passed for ever from his life.

The occupations he was offered and readily accepted were like pleasure parties. As Gentleman-in-waiting on the Venetian Resident at Milan, all the business was pleasant on which he was employed. As Coadjutor to the Judge at Chioggia his duties included especially dinners and games and balls and concerts and feasts. At Feltre, when he had to settle an action somewhere in the province, he took with him a company of young men and women. For twelve days and nights the mad company

rode under the fig trees, along the beautiful roads bordered with vines, never sleeping in their beds, feeding with the peasants as chance allowed, improvising dances and concerts at their halts, living an open-air life of continual diversion, while the action, which was the pretext, was disposed of in two hours. His ship of life is like that pleasure boat adorned with paintings and sculptures, provided with books and musical instruments, which bore him and his comrades along the banks of the Po in the heyday of their youth. They were ten or twelve in all, travelling only by day, choosing pleasant resting-places for the nights, or lodging in some rich monastery. They could all play an instrument—one a violoncello, three a violin, two a hautboy, one a cornet, another a guitar; Goldoni, the only one unable to play, made rhymes on the little incidents of the day, and recited them after supper. Every evening they climbed on to the bridge to give a concert. The dwellers on either bank ran up in crowds, and waved their handkerchiefs. Cremona welcomed them with transports of joy. They were given a great dinner, and the concert began again. The musicians of the place joined them, and the dance lasted all night. At each new halt things were as gay as ever; nothing could extinguish their unconquerable smiles. There was no place in their hearts for misery or despair. Goldoni had no aptitude for tragedy. The storm might rage afar off, but as soon as the sky was clear, threats of the most terrible calamities were dissipated in showers of pleasure.

Goldoni had just burnt the libretto of an opera, which was practically his whole fortune, the promise of his future, and his sole refuge from destitution. It did not prevent him dining with a splendid appetite. "As I was raking the charred remnants of my manuscript into a heap with the tongs to complete their destruction, I remembered that no disappointment had ever been allowed to spoil my supper. So I called for my servant



and told him to lay the table, and serve dinner immediately. I had not long to wait. I ate well, drank even better, and went to bed and slept in peace." On one of his journeys some deserters stole his luggage, not only his portmanteau but also his money and his jewels, and only left him a tragedy called *Belisarius*, which he had composed to pay his way. He went to the nearest stream, drank his fill of water, asked for the curé's house, presented himself before the old priest, and without further delay read him his *Belisarius*. "Monsieur le Curé asked my leave to summon his housekeeper and his clerk. I shouldn't have minded if he had summoned the whole world."

On another journey his driver set him down with his wife in the middle of a bare plain, devastated by war, without supplies or money, or anybody to tell him the way. His wife burst into tears, but Goldoni lifted his eyes to Heaven and gained an inspiration. "'Courage, my dear,' I said. 'Cattolica is six miles hence; we are young and strong enough to walk them. There's no necessity to go back or worry ourselves at all.' My wife consented with the finest grace imaginable, and we continued our journey on foot. After walking for an hour we came to a stream which was too broad to jump, and too deep for my wife to walk through. There was a little wooden bridge for the convenience of pedestrians, but all its planks were broken. I did not give up, but knelt on the ground, and made my wife put her arms around my neck. I got up with a laugh and waded through the water with enormous joy, saying to myself, *Omnia bona mea mecum porto*, 'I carry all my fortune on my back.'"

It is true he had seen tortures and even superintended them, had been at the wars and crossed fields of corpses, and had once seen 25,000 of them, stripped and naked, heaped together on the ground as in a monstrous charnel-house. All around him men wept and groaned



and died. Besides, he knew of his own experience that Fortune can be hard and men be cruel, but his disposition was too equable to dwell long upon such horrors. He did not remember the terrors and the butchery of war, but the pleasure of the armistice. In his whole life he could hardly remember any unpleasant events. As he travelled, his good-humour became ever more lively and alert. It was like the grace of a child.

So he passed on, always the same, jovial and debonair, and so absent-minded that he forgot to kiss the Pope's mule when he visited Clement XIII. He neither turned back nor stopped, nor delayed nor attended, nor absorbed nor concentrated his thoughts. He simply passed. He passed from idea to idea, from adventure to adventure, from country to country. He lived neither in the future nor in the past, but in the present, and with it he seemed altogether satisfied. He was one of those children conceived in satisfaction of whom he somewhere speaks, a rare example of a happy man, absolutely free from pride, and even from the vanity of false modesty. In his memoirs he recounted at length all the good qualities, as well as all the evil, he found within himself. He attributed only a relative importance to things and none to himself, and so belonged to that blessed class whose presence is a blessing, who are good without thinking others wicked, even good enough to make others better. He was profoundly good, honest to the point of candour, frank to the border of simplicity. There was no disease nor vice nor poverty, no contradiction or contraction in his character, no duplicity and no hidden motives. He would always be the victim of a cheat. He could pass through all the corruptions of his time without a stain. To the end he would retain a simple open soul, a guileless and good-natured heart, a bright untroubled spirit, a blessed peacefulness, a gay temper, and the inveterate optimism of his childhood. He would pass through life as he

passed through the streets, laughing at the treachery and tricks of Destiny, carrying all his fortune with him, with his dear Nicoletta on his back, and the heavenly gift of gaiety in his heart. And besides, his adventurous life was full of comic interludes, his even temper disarmed the malice of fortune and mankind, his good-humour turned impending calamities to a happy ending.

He shared the passion for the theatre with all the Venetians of his time. In all respects he was marvellously well equipped for comedy. Comedy, in fact, was his constant preoccupation. As a little child he played with a marionette theatre which his father had constructed for him. When he was nine he composed his first piece. At nine and a half he made his *début* on the stage in his college theatricals. At Rimini he loved to read Aristophanes, Plautus, and Terence, instead of *Barbara Baralippton* and enthymemes which made his head ache. He put two shirts and a nightcap in his pocket, and fled from Rimini on a river boat, which was taking a company of comic actors to Chioggia. With the wide-awake curiosity of a Venetian street urchin, he turned up everywhere, on itinerant stages and behind the footlights of a theatre. To amuse himself and try his powers, he composed a whole host of interludes, musical sketches, plots, libretti, and even tragedies. He had set to work seriously with the manager Imer, whom he followed to Padua and Genoa. His comedy, *Momolo Cortesan*, was already a faint outline of a comedy of character. In all his journeys and resting-places, in all the events of his life, even in his recreations, he had always an eye on the theatre, was always thinking of theatrical matters, and unconsciously collecting an abundance of material fit to be worked up for the stage. So when, one day in 1747, Cæsar Darbès, the Pantaloon, made his way into the barrister's chambers, which Goldoni had opened at Pisa, and after amusing him with all kinds of tomfoolery, rudely demanded a comedy,

Goldoni could hold out no longer. He left his briefs and his clients to look after themselves, and followed mad Pantaloon wherever he cared to go. No man can escape his destiny. Goldoni had been born beneath a comic star, and was destined to write comedies to the end, comedies which assure him imperishable renown.

When he was fourteen, he was amusing himself one day in the library of a Milanese barrister. It was full of the collections of plays which at that time men of culture loved to possess. The young rascal found collections of French and English and Spanish pieces, but, except for a few Italian pieces of ancient date, no collection which could bring credit to Italy. It is Goldoni's glory to have bridged this chasm, and given his country a collection which does it credit. He provided Italy with an Italian drama, and with a collection of plays which remains unique. He wrote innumerable pieces; eighteen editions of them were published during his lifetime. The most complete is the Venetian edition of 1788, in forty-four volumes, but it does not contain all he wrote. His dramatic activity extended over almost forty years, and comprised a quantity of pieces that no man can number. It includes a heap, or rather a mountain, of things good and bad, excellent and mediocre, in prose and in verse, in Italian and in dialect, scenarios and comedies, libretti, tragedies, and dramas. And yet an idea runs through the whole mass, an idea of reforming the stage. There was no violence about it, for Goldoni was benevolence itself; and no system, for he was worlds away from any premeditated design. Still there it is, and as years rolled by and his experience increased, unconsciously and secretly the idea grew more in definiteness and precision, until it became conscious of itself and of its right, and openly declared and proclaimed and defended itself. He had made a frontal attack on the old comedy of Italy.

Goldoni appeared on the scenes at the time when

Italian comedy had begun to feel the assaults of age, and he perceived its failing. By the sole light of his vigorous common sense, and by means of the experience he had acquired by observation of contemporary life, he convinced himself that that life was richer and more complex and fuller of variety and comedy than the few plots and characters which the writers of farces put upon the stage. With his pleasant disregard of obstacles he dared to start a drama based upon real life, and substituted truth for fiction, life for convention, and nature for artifice. Characters, as he calls them, took the place of masks, the outworn splendour of the Piazza was supplemented by all the scenes in the background of human activity. The ancient comedy of adventure and intrigue, the hotchpotch of all classes and characters, became more various and extensive and complex after the pattern of real life. The Italian comedians invented, as fancy seized them; he gave them a settled text: they thought of nothing but raising a laugh; he tried to set them a higher standard. They were content to continue always on the same lines; he made innovations in every piece. Singlehanded, without a precedent of any sort or any model, in the midst of jeers and hisses and plots, a victim to innumerable assaults of savage hostility, he broke through the methods of centuries, and attempted new paths, opened unexplored horizons, and, by means of good-humour and unselfishness and confidence in the result, almost succeeded in getting his own way. He has been called the Molière of Italy.

The everlasting Brighella and Tartaglia and Harlequin, with their unchanging characters and appearance, disappeared, and with them their everlasting somersaults and jokes. They gave place to the husband of the times, for example, such as one might meet him any day in Venice. He is madly in love with his young wife, but ashamed to appear so. He is consumed by jealousy, but terrified lest it should be discovered. He detests the



philanderers, but is bound hand and foot by fashion. At his command his wife receives by herself her *chevaliers servants*, and drives out alone with them, appears at receptions with no companions but them, accepts their presents and permits their insistence, listens to their gossip, and puts up with their familiarity. The husband gave the order, but it worries him to death. He leaves the room and wishes he had stayed; refuses to ride in the carriage, and then runs after it; arrives unexpectedly in the drawing-room which he wanted to avoid, gives out that he is going away, and can't make up his mind to start; plays the spy, interferes, meddles, suspects, and makes disturbances, invites guests and insults them, always supremely ridiculous and marvellously human. Such is Don Roberto in the *Dama Prudente*.

Similarly Isabella and Silvia with their unreal and impersonal grace give place to the Venetian shop-girl. She walks in her black shawl along the great Calli, on feast days a gold chain around her neck, with her active hands and her quick short steps, a lively little gossip. She is deserted by her husband, but continues to live by the hearth which he has left, and spends her time in swaddling her baby, nagging at her servant, and watching over the ashes of her hearth and the ruins of her happiness. At last, by her resignation and patience and delightfully obstinate fidelity, she succeeds in recapturing her faithless husband. Such is Bettina in *La Buona Moglie*.

So also the old men of the ancient repertoire disappeared, the shiftless vagabonds whom they teased and beat, Pantaloon who became irritable and ill-natured from being cheated, swindled, robbed, and deceived by his wife, and generally pulled by the leg. An old ne'er-do-well takes his place, poor and embittered and solitary: he has suffered much at the hands of Fortune, and has become a hater of his kind. He has no longer anything



to do but mind his neighbours' business, and nothing to talk except scandal. To play the part, which is his no longer, he finds scandals to spread, and in case of need invents them. He exaggerates and enlarges upon them to give himself more importance, almost unconsciously, and more from unhappiness and lack of employment than from any wish to deceive or hurt. When his victims turn upon him and abandon him ignominiously, he is astonished and cries out, and sees in their desertion the justification of his complaints. Such is Don Marzio in the *Bottega del Caffè*—the most profound study in all this drama.

Don Marzio, Bettina, and Don Roberto were what Goldoni called characters, and it must be remarked in passing that Goldoni really meant by character anything which is not simply masquerade. He includes not only what is generally called character, but also a *tic*, a grimace, an excrescence, a passion, or a quality, or, as Diderot said, even a condition. A mere liar, a mere gambler, a mere prodigal are just as much characters to him as a pompous miser who wants to cut a dash without opening his purse, or a jealous miser angry and pleased at the same moment with the presents which his wife receives, or a benevolent hypochondriac whose bitter humour and excellent heart fight curious battles. A grumbler, a shopkeeper in the Merceria, a philanderer, a linen-mender of Castello, a notary, a doctor, a lawyer, are characters as much as an adventurer who has practised all these trades together. All he required was that his *dramatis personæ* should not be the creation of fancy but real living people, that abstractions should give way to individuals of flesh and blood, and that nature should take the place of convention in the action of the piece.

In the first place, then, his comedy embraced all types of contemporary character. Secondly, it admitted all existing scenes. It is not only in the Piazza, as in

Italian comedy, nor in the drawing-room, as in French, that the innumerable events and conflicts of daily life occur, that men and women interact and passions work. Life is confined to no time and place. Every country and every kind of surroundings are alike the scene of its activities ; to confine them to a single background is to mutilate life. Some things, it is true, do happen in the street, but there are innumerable buildings, town halls, theatres, hospitals, law-courts, flats and prisons opening on to it. So also, besides drawing-rooms, there are all kinds of rooms in which men act and talk, ante-chambers, kitchens, cellars, attics, shops, shop-parlours, courtyards. Goldoni made use of them all. He recalled all the rooms he had entered in his wandering life, he employed all possible surroundings, all peculiarities of environment, every variety of setting to illustrate his characters. There were scenes in the open air, and scenes where a whole crowd was grouped around two little candles. There were landscapes and seascapes, and old women knitting by the light of one oil lamp. He shifted the action from restaurant to palace, from the house of a silk weaver to a gambling den, from a market stall to a tavern, from a flat to a hotel, from a town hall to a theatre, from the trench of a camp to the chamber of a magistrate. He needed the drawing-room to display, at its cards and its chocolate, the little world which babbled and fluttered, and talked scandal, and exchanged bows and gossip, always on the look-out for a gift, or a cake, or a piece of news. No drawing-room, however, exhausted the interests of life. If he depicted a street, it occupied the whole stage only for a time, and then gave way to other views and other places. The street itself, moreover, was no longer any street whatever, such as served the old Comedy for the scene of every sort of action, but changed its character according to its town. A street in Venice was depicted such as it appeared in a picture by Canaletto or by Guardi ; the mooring-posts

with their blazoned tops lay twisted in the sparkling water, a bridge of white stone jutted out over the narrow Rio, chimneys were outlined against the sky, trees grew behind walls, and old boats slept against the quay. One gondolier arrived, and then another. "*Oe!—Vien a pian, vien a pian!—Oe!—Premi che te casca la testa!*"

In short (and this is the last point) the comedy of Goldoni is neither a comedy of intrigue like the Italian, nor a comedy of character or manners according to the older rule, but a mosaic of every species of comedy. Nature, it must be remembered, knows no species. Infinitely complex, illogical, and manifold, she establishes no fixed barrier between different phenomena. With her everything is allied and everything opposed, tragedy and comedy go side by side, laughter and tears are two brothers and resemble one another. No two things are ever seen identical and together. In this respect the comedy of Goldoni follows nature and defies classification. The *Rusteghi*, for instance, the masterpiece, perhaps, of all his work, was undoubtedly a comedy of character, since it portrayed three (or rather four) domestic tyrants, all punctilious and fussy, avaricious and jealous, despotic and morose, crushing their households beneath the intolerable weight of their authority. But since at the same time these boors were Venetian bourgeois, attached to the ancient and existing order of things, rabid conservatives, sworn enemies of innovation, moulded by the immemorial discipline of their native town to sobriety and thrift and a life of self-control just as much as to the fearful exercise of their ancient *patria potestas*, it was also a comedy of manners. The *Putta Onorata* sketches the habits of the world of gondoliers. It takes the sturdy figure of a work-girl, and displays her as a pattern. It has recourse to the threadbare device of supposititious babies; it denounces and laughs and moralises; nothing is outside its scope. At one and the same time it is screaming farce, a

bourgeois tragedy, a lesson in morals, a popular tableau, a character sketch, and a Venetian scene. In his *Cavaliere e la Dama*, a very fine satire on the system of *chevaliers servants*, and the burlesques of Pasquin, were both grafted on the almost tragic theme of an unhappy prisoner's wife, afflicted by the tongues of scandal-mongers, and the claws of vultures. Everywhere all kinds of characters are mixed together, and all the opposites marry. Sword-thrusts succeed to dancing, tricks to tears, buffoonery to preaching, solemn drama to caricature, affectations of sensibility to irony. And just as a surface is seldom or never found to be absolutely the same all over, so one seldom or never finds a soul entirely uniform. No one is entirely good, or entirely bad; no one entirely heroic or utterly ridiculous. In real life there is nobody altogether ludicrous, and even the most perfect characters are occasionally absurd.

Such a man as Monsieur Jourdain in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, for instance, has never really existed. No one has ever met a *bourgeois gentilhomme* who is nothing but a *bourgeois gentilhomme* in all his words and deeds and thoughts, in the presence of his wife as in the presence of his mistress, with his servants as with his dancing-master, in public as in private, without doubts or scruples, without hesitations or contradictions, always, from beginning to end, unchangeably a *bourgeois gentilhomme*. To many Italians M. Jourdain appears merely a personification. Donna Eleonora of Goldoni's *Femmine Puntigliose*, though in reality a mere sketch, seems a real person by comparison with him. She is a little bourgeois woman from the province of Naples, whose head has been turned by wealth. Nothing on earth would persuade her to enter the carriage of a person of her own rank. She takes her husband to Palermo, and tries to insinuate herself into society. To effect this purpose, she humbles herself, and puts up with every rebuff, and submits to every imposition. At last, having swallowed



in silence innumerable insults, she recovers herself, understands her shame, apologises for her ridiculous behaviour, speaks out her mind to these titled adventuresses, takes her revenge on them by showing how hardly they have treated her, and at the same time overwhelms them with their own misconduct.

It was in this sense that Goldoni was a fervent disciple of the rule, *Sequere Naturam*. Voltaire praised him for delivering his country from the Harlequins, and called him "the child of Nature and her painter." Grosley said he was fertile, simple, and varied, but as uneven and disorderly as Nature. He himself wrote that he directed all his efforts in composition to leaving Nature unspoiled. According to him Nature, which was his inspiration and his model, which he observed and copied and caricatured, must not be spoiled. He filled himself, impregnated himself with Nature. She was his finished model, his untarnishable treasure; it was his business to draw from her source, and to read in her book, and to prevent art interfering by making selections or additions. He added, if anything, only the jovial frankness of an honest disposition. Nature, with all her grand indifference, never takes sides or preaches. Goldoni, with his candour and tender sensibility, preaches with all his soul like the good little bourgeois that he was. In another place he wrote that he had searched Nature through and through and always found her beautiful, so long as she gave him virtuous models and sound morality.

In short the comedy of Goldoni was a marvellous mirror of the age.

If we open at random one of the forty-four volumes of the Venetian Edition or one of Pasquali's eighteen, there arises from the yellow pages a quaint image of old Italy as she then was, and before all and above all of Venice with her bridges and canals and quays, her parks and her Piazza, her market-places, cafés, towers, and her populace of every form and hue. There is no more perfect



picture of Venice as she was in the eighteenth century. As you read the volumes you can almost hear the pedlars breaking the silence of some little square with their "Needles from Flanders!" "Pins!" "String!" or two angry gondoliers wrangling furiously at the bend of a canal: "*Piutosto a fondo che siar!—Piutosto in tochi che dar in drio!—Da in drio, fionazzo d'una quinta in cope!—Sia ti, semenza de buovoli!*" At last the fare is tired of the dispute and disembarks, and then they push off into the open, farther and farther, shouting as they go, "*Spaccamonti!—Capitan Coviello!—Ah! musso—Ah! dindio!*" And then again the music of their speech rises from their open lips like a ripple of laughter or the flutter of a bird; in its oaths "*Sangue di Diana,*" "By the blood of Diana," as well as in its caresses, "Heart of mine," "*Vissere mie,*" or in its proverbs, "A good nose can tell apples from peaches." As you read you can see that great crowd with its high spirits and its horse-play for ever going and coming, sitting down, chattering and passing on.

There are hangers-on, café-keepers, hotel proprietors, card-sharpers, swindlers, wenches of the town, market-girls. Lawyers plead in Court, wearing wigs fit for comedy. Fishermen from the Lido scatter alike their spittle and their proverbs. The miser walks along, knitting his own stockings; *chevaliers servants* in the shadow of a window work at fine embroidery, while Mirandolina, passing below, flicks her rosy cheek against the bars. Gossips sit huddled together on the door-steps; women of fashion stir their cups with a silver spoon; the loungers of the café toy daintily with an ice; girls dance the *furlana*; an old woman sings "*Alla vilota*;" over there they are having a game of *semola*. Then there are the pleasure-seekers from abroad, the wig-makers, the tailors, the wits, the silk-weavers, peasants from the mainland, soldiers from the arsenal, antiquaries, the three *orbi* of the Piazza. And there is Nicoletto, the little young man, playing at *jolicœur*,

with a medal instead of a watch at the end of his ribbon, and Madame Gatteau, the French embroideress, who knows no Italian, and is driven away with her unsavoury odours. And there, too, is Ser Todero Brontolon, the old skinflint, who hides even his coffee and his sugar. He summons his valet to his room, and gives him a lecture.

"You know what I have got to say? I went into the kitchen just now, and found a fire blazing fit for purgatory. They don't give away wood, you know, and I won't have mine wasted in this fashion."

"You've been in the kitchen, have you?"

"Yes, sir, I have. And what have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing. Except that when I came back from the market I found the fire out, the meat all cold, and I gave the servant a scolding."

"But can't you boil the pot without using a cartload of wood?"

"But how? With a twig or two?"

"Bah!"

At the top of the social scale, the Marquis of Ripaverde, who has been accustomed to live like a nobleman, struts along in all his glory. "Truly," says Brighella, "any one can see that you are a fine gentleman!" "How?" "Because it pleases your worship to do nothing." And at the bottom of the ladder in the far corner of some back slum the old widow Barbara is living out a drab life of heroic self-deception. "Well! why should I grumble. When I finish the housekeeping, I amuse myself by working. I have a laugh with the children and a laugh with the servant, then there's the cat, my jester, I call him; would you like to see the pretty little thing? Now, where's he got to? Pussy! Pussy!"

Lelio, with his gloves all in holes and his bone snuff-box, is the broken-down lord, trying to cut a figure; while Clelio, who goes about showing his tongue to every

one he meets, is the *malade imaginaire*. On any mention of ill-fortune or accident, of people who have come to grief or died suddenly, he spits on the ground, and says a little prayer to avert bad luck. And for glutton we have the Count Onofrio, with his eyes even bigger than his belly. If he is at a party he drains the unfinished cups of chocolate, one after another, and surreptitiously slips the dessert into his pocket. If a dispute arises between some of the sharp-tongued gossips in the drawing-room, he, you may be sure, will lose neither his temper nor his opportunity. No. He touches the Count Ottavio on the sleeve and whispers in his ear, "Count Ottavio, just one word. What do you say? While these stupid people are splitting hairs about nothing, come with me to the kitchen, and we'll eat up the rissoles."

At dawn the baker's boy comes whistling under his customer's window. On a barge loaded with herbs and vegetables Donna Pasqua is arriving, accompanied by two boatmen from Palestrina. Before the door of some fine villa on the Brenta they are mooring a little skiff. And in the hotel we are introduced to Brighella, the father of Olivetta, the famous dancer. Her hard-worked favours have brought in quite a fortune, and now, while a lackey in livery is drawing the curtains of his apartment, Signor Brighella is ransacking her well-filled strong-box.

"Hullo! Two torch-carriers! all of silver and two more with our arms on them; and here are some snuffers with holders, all kinds. And these saucers, and this kettle, too, and here's a foot-warmer! A drinking-cup! Salt-cellars! Everything of silver. How beautiful! And here's a gold watch! made in London! A repeater! Worth 100 crowns at least! Well, there are no such things in Italy. They know how to treat a dancer! Poor things that we are! And all this just to be able to take one's hat off to Madame Olivetta." When she comes in, he proposes that she should wash

her hands. But Madame Olivetta has washed them already. "Yes," says he, "but not in the silver basin." Yet another scene sets before us the outside of a theatre on the night of a performance ; the lights, the struggling crowds, the arrival of the maskers, the gondoliers drawn up at the landing-stage, the lantern-bearers with their little group of muffled people trailing behind, the ticket-seller with his hoarse "Tickets, this way, please ; five-pence each, pay in advance." Elsewhere we find the stage itself, as it appears on the morning of a rehearsal. Here are the actors, the stage-manager, the author, the prompter all arguing, criticising, advising, telling stories, giving their opinions, discussing the respective merits of the old Italian comedy, and the new comedy of Goldoni. And between whiles they practise their cues.

Again we are at a café, a-twinkle with masks ; or on the Ridotto, rustling with sequins, or in the kitchen with its polished coppers, or amid the hubbub of some middle-class removal, or in the silence of a lonely *traghetto*. Gondoliers in their red hats talk over the advantages and disadvantages of their calling. Those who work under a fixed master earn even a pound of lard with difficulty. "There is no money to be made on the ferry nowadays ; what with the bad times and the general lack of money, and the conduct of those scurvy fellows, who, if they have to go from Canareggio to Riva di Biasio, will go on their ten toes." So the talk goes. Or perhaps they drink out of the neck of a flask, or play cards, or argue with one another by way of passing the time. A woman comes with their dinner in a basket. Silence at once. On the ripples of the water the rind of a melon floats, sinks, and rises again without end.

Bright suits are seen everywhere, relieved by silver swords, and pigeons' wings sprinkled with frost, and veils of black gauze, and white satin masks, and petticoats of a thousand stripes, and flowered dresses, and

linen aprons. Now it is the warehouse or the mezá, now the goldsmith's or the draper's. One scene displays two candles at the corners of a card table, another shows a *scaldino* trailing on the brick floor at the foot of a cradle, where a child lies crying. The widow Lucrezia contrives to live as she can. She lends money for short periods, and lets out fancy dresses, and sells good numbers for the lottery. The number fifty-eight, on which Sior Boldo asks her opinion, has no value to her mind. She tried it a fortnight ago, and then she dreamed of blood. "Whose blood?" asked Sior Boldo. "Simply blood, I need not say whose." Madame Costanza and Madame Dorotea complain of their servants.

"With mine the house is full of men. One time it's a brother, now it's her cousin. And the wine disappears at an enormous pace."

"Just like one of mine, hardly as tall as my finger. She cleared me out to the last bottle of vinegar."

"That's nothing. Here's a good story of one of mine. Just as she had put a dish on the table she snatched a piece of it."

"Mine did the same. When we were in bed she filled the kitchen with her friends. Would you believe it, one evening I found four of them round a maize pudding!"

"Just like mine. I gave her notice, and when I went to see her wardrobe, I discovered a thousand things, even dried raisins."

"It's terrible with servants like these, one really doesn't know what to do."

On the other hand the old rascals Biasio and Zulian are delighted with their servants. They meet on the piazza, one wearing bands, the other *en gamberluque*. One says: "My girl's a perfect treasure; she's keen as a razor; she's up before the sun has hardly risen. Straightway she lights the fire and comes to my room. If I have finished my sleep she opens the window, warms



my stockings and my shirt, and brings my coffee. We drink it together. At this time of day there are not many girls like that." "Think of mine. There are only the two of us at the fireside. We tell stories, play games, and she cooks me chestnuts; you should see her chestnuts, soft as butter, you would think they were marzipan." The Municipal Council meets in the Town hall and asks Harlequin, who acts as their usher, to take his hat off. "But I meet you twenty times a day and never take it off. Why should I do so now?" "Now we are sitting, we are in Council, take it off." In the corner of a little *piazza*, two bald toothless old women quarrel about their ages. "How much would you give me?" "And you me?" "Except for one ear I am still sound." "Why, I have got two sound teeth left," she replies, and taking her companion's hand, makes her feel them, right at the back of her mouth. "There! do you feel that great tusk?" Another time it's a gaming saloon, a palace library, or the beach of Chioggia, facing the sparkling ripples of the sea. Pasqua, Lucietta, Libera, Orsetta, Checa, they all take their wicker chairs out to the beach and their lace-making, and with their noses on their drums they ply their needles. Tofolo arrives with his hands in his pockets, just back from Sotto Marina, where he has unloaded some fennel. "What will you give me?" "What do you want?" "*Zucche barucche*." He pays them with pieces of gourd, cooked in the oven; they stick their teeth into the popular sweetmeat; the sea is blue; the sun is bright. Suddenly on a word a quarrel breaks out; they shriek and shout; chairs fly; strings of insult pour from their mouths. "*Checa la Pouine!*" "Tofolo, the marmot." "Lucietta, the boaster." Directly their husbands and brothers and fiancés return from their fishing, they are told the whole story. In their excitement they rush at one another, they collect stones, draw their knives, rush to their boats to pick up their guns; the women weep and

accuse one another and make horns to avert bad luck, dry their eyes, shriek, howl, more ready than ever for a fight. At every blow the debate is renewed. Tofolo, the marmot, "the man who gave him the name is a ——," runs off to the Cogitore to complain. "Do you want a summons?" "What's a summons?" "Do you ask for punishment for these wretches?" "Yes, your Excellency." "What sort of punishment?" "The gallows, your Excellency." Both parties are cited to appear before the judge. The men come in red or green hats and ear-rings of gold wire, the women in white veils, which hang over their head and are held behind by the waistband. The door is hardly open before all the women rush in, each trying to be first. "Me, me, me," they cry. Checa is called up first, according to the order of the list. Pasqua says, "Of course she is the youngest." "That's not everything," interposes Lucietta, "it needs money," and Orsetta adds, "Now you know you must not keep us dawdling here three hours, we've got our houses to look after." Then Libera, "I say, you take my advice and see that she's innocent." When they are examined, they won't sit down or won't take the oath, or tell their ages, or they haven't seen anything at all, or pretend to be deaf. "Are you deaf?" "I don't hear much." Eventually the Venetian judge, a good fellow, whom they call Sior Paruca de Stopa ("Old Tow-wig") settles the disputes, commands "mine host" to bring wine and sweetmeats, summons violins, and they all dance the *furlana* in the piazza. Or there are other scenes. The tawny sail of a *bragozzo* is seen against the sky; Paron Toni's dirty old hulk returns to harbour; fish are unloaded, and shells glitter in the baskets of unpolished chain. Paron Fortunato scatters his strange sea-jargon; the sea-faring folk Paron Vincenzo, Beppo, Tofolo, Titto-Nane appear as real as life with the smell of brine. A whole colony of Adriatic fisher-folk come on, and all the little old sea-board town, as primitive and full

of life as Venice in her early days. All this one can see by opening an old leather-bound book, on which is written *Baruffe Chiozzotte*.

In spite of the accuracy and vividness of his observation and the vivacity of the characters and situations which he took from life and actual events, and in spite of the exactness with which he copied nature, the most striking point about the realistic comedy of Goldoni is not its difference from the old Italian comedy, but, in spite of all, the close resemblance to it. The one is the direct descendant or rather the immediate successor of the other. It is not only that Goldoni, for the most part, kept to the ancient division into three acts, nor that he wrote entire scenes in the style of the Old Comedy and borrowed others from it, nor that he continued its farcical humour and trivial dirtiness, its masquerading valets and the lovers, who, for the most part, are mere qualities personified. But the real reason is, that Goldoni composed on the spur of the moment as readily and thoroughly as did an actor of the Old Comedy. There is this difference, however, that he improvises, so to speak, at leisure and alone, and that he makes his actor preserve his design and style intact, and stamps his own mark on the comedy of the past and makes an original work out of a mere type. But that is all.

It generally took him eight days to write a comedy of three acts. The *Festino*, which is a play in verse of five acts, was designed and composed and acted all within fifteen days. The *Casa Nova* was finished off in three days and three nights. This became so much a habit with him, that when he arrived in Paris and was given two months to write a single play, he seemed to be having a rest. "I don't get so tired at Paris," he says, "because it is merely a charming occupation to write a comedy in two months. But it's hard work to write it in ten days." His work certainly shows the effects of this hasty composition. It gives the impression of

having been made up on the spot, the impression of the spoken rather than the written word. It is altogether informal and unpremeditated, and necessarily lacks those qualities which time and care, reflection and effort can alone produce. It never goes to the bottom of anything, never fully works anything out. Too often his plays are mere sketches. Even when he really applies himself to the task, and has leisure to aim at a different result, the piece is still little more than a bare outline. He wrote the *Bourru Bienfaisant* at his ease, in French and for the French, but to Grimm and Bachaumont it still seemed like a scenario. His characters are rather lively sketches than finished pictures, striking attitudes and unfinished outlines than portraits with light and shade. They are like pleasant notes drawn hurriedly by a rapid and skilful hand. He never gives us more than a glimpse of a situation. He seems just to notice them, as he passes by, and to point them out for some industrious person to make notes of them. His dialogues never keep to one subject, but jump like children's talk from point to point. Things arrange themselves as best they can, often like nuts upon a stick. The dénouements are unforeseen, unexplained, inexplicable, and often present us with sudden changes by which, in the twinkling of an eye and for no apparent reason, the wicked become good, the ridiculous disappear, and sins are forgotten. The art of leading up to dénouements, the art of controlling and developing his characters, is as absent as Art itself.

Goldoni was always in a hurry. He wrote in such haste that he seemed to have no time to read over what he had written, and so much, that he continually repeated himself and contradicted himself, and used the same characters and subjects over again in different pieces. Sometimes even in the course of a single play, he endowed his characters with tics from which they were free in the first act, or in the course of the action made essential difference in their appearances. It is said that he was



forced to do this, that the necessities of the Italian drama of his time imposed on him these conditions. For the sake of his actors' wages, which depended on always having some novelty to advertise, he had to compose without ceasing, invent without a moment's thought, create characters upon the spot. All this is true; but it is also true that his fertile, easy-going genius would not allow him to compose in any other way. It had never been his habit to stop or delay. He was always passing on. As formerly he passed from town to town, and from one kind of employment to another kind, so now he passes from conceit to conceit, from one comic idea to another; he stops only as long as the pleasure of discovery lasts, and puts off the necessity of going deeper into one discovery by passing elsewhere to another. He recognises no limits of place or society, no bounds to his discursiveness; he never reconsiders or corrects. Without any hesitation he follows the flights of his imagination, opposed alike to thought and argument. He never clipped his wings, or submitted to the discipline of Gassendi's favourite disciple. Style and literary flavour are nothing to him. He is neither philosopher nor thinker nor artist, but always himself, frankly and ingenuously impulsive. There was no reason for him to restrain his impulses or curb the quality of his temperament. It is just where he sets himself an ambitious design, as in his *Terence* or *Tasso* or *Molière*, or when he really works at a thing as in his *Bourru Bienfaisant* that all his charm disappears. Generally he does no violence to his temperament, and therefore fulfils his task with grace.

If his comedy reveals all the defects of improvisation, it also reveals its qualities. Its naturalness, spontaneity, and freshness are admirable, and above all its inexhaustible profusion of *vis comica*. For Goldoni to set a play going with three bright and spirited acts, it needed just a trifle, a saying, or a gesture, or a recollec-



tion, or an old scenario, or a new romance. The *Finta Ammalata* is inspired by the humours of his prima donna, the *Impostore* by the knaveries of his captain at Ragusa, the *Pettegolezzi delle Donne* by a glimpse of the old Armenian Abagigi under the clock tower. He was asked to dramatise a novel, which would have necessitated reading it. He preferred to invent a play, containing possible plots for a hundred novels, and filled a new notebook with the *Incognita*. He was hissed one Shrove Tuesday evening, and avenged himself on the public by sending his chief actress to the footlights to promise them sixteen new comedies within the next twelve months. At the moment when he made this rash undertaking he had not thought of a single one ; but instead of the sixteen he had promised, he forgot to count them, and madcap as he was, he gave them one too many. With his facile pen the piece seemed to grow spontaneously while it was being acted. His memory was like the storehouse of a theatre ; crowds of characters surged upon an instant to his brain ; a thousand traits of real life seemed to drop from the skies, or from no one knows where, and to crowd beneath his pen, a pleasant hustling crew, all crying for admittance. He did not need complicated stage machinery or elaborate transformations, or *coups-de-théâtre* ; four chairs, a table, cups of chocolate, and divine reality were sufficient to set him going and to give flesh and bones to the creatures of his imagination. It amused him, and he was the first to laugh at his own invention, and communicated to us his own surprise, still warm and fresh and living. It is true that he completed two or three hundred plays, but the important thing is that each of these plays is a gem, that each is composed with an abundance of matter which would have sufficed another for two or three comedies. No one ever invented more situations, imagined more events, wove more intrigues, arranged more accidents, seized more opportunities for fun, marshalled more characters, produced more persons,

imparted more gaiety, and scattered or poured out a greater profusion of his riches with more recklessness of heart. The laughter, which arose from this jumble, was frank and fresh, pure and unrestrained, thoughtless and untinged by bitterness. It rose in the air like the gay outburst of a joyful heart.

With the directness of a natural force and the elemental simplicity of a creature from a golden age, he calmed and simplified existence. Always eager and obliging, charitable and good-humoured, he was as undefiled as water from a spring, as transparent as a crystal. Conscious of his limitations, he was content with the talents which he had, and employed them as he could. In spite of scorn and derision and misunderstanding, he triumphed over all obstacles with his smile, avenged all offences by forgiving them, and continued to vouchsafe to all, bad and sad and wicked alike, a salutary example of good-humour. "*Gran Goldoni*" the crowd shouted with enthusiasm on Carnival evenings dead and gone. For all these reasons he was great.

## CHAPTER X

### CARLO GOZZI AND HIS "FIABE"

AND yet the Italian comedy which Goldoni supplanted was the national drama *par excellence*, invented by the Italians, hall-marked with their genius, the only comic contribution of the race, their monopoly and their triumph. It was their ancient and charming possession ; poetry, and folly, and extravagance, sovereign and unresisted ; their infancy, their tender memories, the beloved smiling past in the background of their memory. And, to some loyal spirits, it was melancholy to see it disappear without hope of return. The reality which took its place had none of the value of its winged fancies. Little peaked hats and flowered skirts were an ill substitute for the masks of the old days, with their vivid ironical shapes. The sermonising moralities were driving out a spangled tribe of figures which had become constant guests of the domestic fancy, whose exploits and comic business were so many venerable customs, whose talk had lulled and charmed and delighted generations of simple hearts. What great joy was attached to Harlequin's wooden sword, after all ! And must one say farewell to that old friend, nevermore see the hare's-foot at the corner of his cap, nor hear his witticisms striking the same old keys of laughter ?

Carlo Gozzi would fain have it otherwise ; here it is that he steps in.

Think, in the midst of this lively and glittering Venice, of the quaint silhouette of this long-backed, gloomy figure. Harlequin, you should pay your respects to Carlo Gozzi !

He, too, belongs to the "Home for Poets" to which the needy and prolific family of the Gozzi has been reduced. He is, alas! brother-in-law of Irminda; and brother of Gasparo, like him always busy inking paper, hunting a rhyme, feeding on fancies, battenning on the dew; but without his grace of culture, without his smiling spirit, gloomier, more crabbed, keener, and bitterer.

He was born at Venice in 1723, and then at sixteen went to join the army in Dalmatia, where he led the life of pleasure of a young Venetian officer; and then, at the end of three years, returned home, and for eighteen more, in the midst of lawsuits and pettifoggers, tried to recover the ruins of his dilapidated patrimony; and then spent twenty-five years in the midst of actors and particularly actresses, listening to them, advising, directing, abusing them, taking them to *casotti*, escorting them in the street, taking it into his head to teach them spelling, French, and modesty—while they danced in rings round his lean figure, circled his silence with loud whisperings, and his melancholy with bursts of laughter; and after that again, and perhaps all through, busy with indefinite commercial undertakings, dealing in lace or plush or horsehair, when it is not cocoa, or Cyprus wine, or carriages, or poultry cages, and going so far as to offer his services to those who want broken pots mended; with all this, Count Carlo Gozzi is poor, an old bachelor, and a poet. When the patrician Caterina Tron meets him in the street, she calls to him, "Good morning, Bear!" And in the Academy of Granelleschi he is named "The Solitary."

Like his brother, a sworn enemy to bows and smirks; unskilled in the flattery of the street, the shop, and conversation; delighting in lonely spots and deserted walks, wearing out many pens, and sparing his lungs all the more for that, walking with tardy steps, leaning his head against doorways, he is incurably melancholy. It is in vain that he takes infinite trouble to seem cheerful,

and tickles himself to make himself laugh, and affects invincible hilarity, and thanks Heaven for the merry temperament it gave him, and repeats at the close of each mishap the same refrain, *si rida*, "Let us laugh!" He is incurably melancholy, filled with regrets, rancours, and grievances. He is always railing against somebody—his sister-in-law, or the Abbé Chiari, or Goldoni the advocate, or Ricci the actress, "a mischievous butterfly," or Gratarol the Secretary, "an infatuated puppet." It seems that bile is the bitter substance of his mind, and that his talent needs the sting of a quarrel. He never writes but in anger, and to ease his anger. He moves along frowning, with wrinkled forehead, his temper bristling with spikes, his imagination compact of whims, his tongue ready with sallies and sarcasms. And he is strange to the point of singularity. As he is an original, so nothing that happens to him is ordinary; as he is eccentric, so the mischances that besiege him have nothing commonplace in them. All the imps of the lagoon unite to play him the most cursed tricks. If he is busy shaving, you may be sure that important affairs will interrupt him in the middle; if there is a single puddle anywhere, he will unfailingly soak his shoes in it. One day he is taken for somebody else, for the patrician Paruta, for Daniele Zanchi, or for the impresario Michele dell' Agata (who however is distinctly shorter and fatter in figure). One man kisses the hem of his cloak, another begs money of him, another asks for a night's lodging, another thanks him for getting his son out of prison, without his knowing where these folk spring from. One moonlit night, when he is strolling on the Piazza with the noble Francesco Gritti, the noble Andrea Gradenigo hits him twice in the back, crying, "Why don't you go to bed, you donkey?" Another night, in November, as he is returning foundered from Friuli, desiring nothing but his bed, he finds his street blocked, his palazzo blazing with lights in the darkness like a sun, two guardians who



shut the door in his face, a majordomo in gold lace who opens it to him and conducts him from room to room through the magnificence of a Venetian entertainment which is being given in his own house unknown to him. There is no doubt about it, such vicissitudes are not common; the man to whom they fall is no ordinary person. And, perceiving himself different, Count Carlo Gozzi sets himself carefully to cultivate his singularities.

Around him the Venetian fashion in dress is incessantly changing; he remains faithful to his faithless tailor Guiseppe Fornace, wears the same wig from 1735 onwards, and only buys fresh shoe-buckles when the old ones are broken. Around him the soul of Venice gives itself up to the "pleasures and levities of Cythera"; a breath of love swells sails and sighs; the sounds of kissing are heard behind shutters; he is neither chaste nor dissolute nor hypocritical, abhorring misconduct and lewdness and libertinism, despising "the talkative gallants and the freebooters of Venus," holding a courtesan as abominable as Boiardo's Ogre, and replying to a poor girl who had been deserted by a colonel, "My little doll, you know nothing of the true sweetness of love; you think the delight of passion is to appease it like the beasts." Other people are indifferent or sceptical; he remains religious like a decrepit old man or a child. Other people chatter; he keeps silence. Other people go with the current; he works up against the stream. They think everything that is new is beautiful; he is incensed by novelty. Doggedly conservative, mildly insane and in nowise ashamed of his mania, believing in the efficacy of the gallows and the sovereignty of God; preferring weak minds to strong, and holding the strong mind weak; having never fallen so low, for his part, as to think himself a thing of dirt or mire, nor a dog nor a swine; relishing the old unsubtle poets, national in their inspiration; having chosen for his domain of letters the garden of simplicity and purity, and devoting himself

to it with all his strength, he calls himself a Don Quixote. He has a sacred horror of the sublimity and the "illumination" of his enlightened age. He holds a goblin more delightful than a system, a prejudice more allowable than a Gallicism, a fancy more truthful than a reality. Modern philosophy overpowers him. Modern phraseology drives him frantic: "Sensibility . . . insensibility . . . my brethren! . . . my fellow-creatures! . . . The voice of kinship . . . the cry of nature. . . ." Pathetic comedy makes him laugh. The goddess Reason makes him shriek. The Abbé Chiari, pursuing him with verses as long as the tube of a squirt, puts him to flight. The advocate Goldoni, trivial, suburban, as insipid as the actual, makes him furious. Voltaire, Rousseau, Mirabeau, Helvétius, and "other impostors," give him nausea. He is so made that to all their gibberish—infesting books, contaminating minds, attacking the stage, darkening character, spoiling the old world and threatening to destroy it—he prefers a child's smile, a nurse's caress, or a fairy-tale. Yes, a little song rising from the side of a cradle, a *storia* retailed by Cigolotti on the Piazza, an old masked play with Harlequin religiously thwacking Pantaloon, contain to his mind more sense, more wisdom, and more truth than all their physics, metaphysics, moralities, reforms, theories, encyclopædias, sentimentalities, and crocodile-tears. If he were told the *Peau d'âne*, he would take an extreme delight in it. He remains the convinced partisan of old things and old folk, old customs and old ways, old remedies and old expressions, stories and recipes of goodwives, servants who stay all their lives in the same household, and the old stage, whose only object avowedly is to relax and to entertain. And the cricket whose chirping fills his head is the cricket on the hearth.

So then, leaving space to the new fashions, giving up the field to the jugglers with ideas, surrendering the vogue to the beauties of progress, the discoveries of science, and the liberty of shameless licence; turning his back

on a corrupt age, which laughs at the Platos and the Petrarchs, and recalling to life the days long past, "when women had not become men, and men women, and men and women monkeys," he takes refuge in the past as behind a rampart, and in dreams as in a blessed state.

Far from all platitudes and all pretensions, among unlikely regions, behind clouds lined with silver and amber, the sleeper trails his scarlet cloak and the fine essence of his melancholy. A wan smile awakens in the depths of his sad spirit. A spider hangs its golden network from the walls of his brain. Caprice plays him some wild melody on a porcelain violin. A thousand quaint figures rove before his eyes; a thousand recollections in phantom array spring from his memory; the horizon of his landscape sinks into the distance, fades far away, becomes hazy, and is lost in infinity. Fancy consoles him for reality; the supernatural liberates him from nature; illusion heals him of life's disease. In vain does the water lap gently at the foot of the marble steps where his dream is seated, or a brown sail stand out against the opal shore, or a bird-catcher offer his *osei che canta* to the passers-by; he sees neither water, nor sail, nor bird. He sees nothing and hears nothing; he is in the moon, in space; he soars in the distance of the heaven. Alas! is not life's beauty also—nay, that more than anything else—all in the distance of the heaven? All the things that go on there, that men's ears cannot catch, that the eye of flesh cannot gaze on; the story told by the wreaths of vapour that rise from the lagoon in moonlight, and dance and sport and circle round; and sylphs, and goblins, and fairies, and mystery, and the breeze! The breeze blows; can you understand its song? It is of far-away fancies, scattered voices, charming mirages; the world of the Invisible with its stealthy shadows and muffled tread; a sigh, a regret, a gleam, a puff of smoke—everything that is written in smoke! . . .

Then, since the earthquake at Lisbon has brought

back to Venice a company of players unique in the world ; since every night, on the boards of the S. Samuele theatre, Sacchi and Fiorilli and Zannoni and Darbès are scattering fire from behind the masks of Truffaldino and Tartaglia and Brighella and Pantaloon ; since Goldoni is triumphant and prose runs riot, and the age is feeling tedium, one fine day in 1761 Carlo Gozzi takes it into his head to carry them a play in his own manner, which he has got from an old nurse's tale, and calls the *Amor delle tre Melarancie*. Thus it was that his Fiabesque drama came into being.

The Fiabesque drama of Gozzi runs precisely counter to the drama of Goldoni. The one was all observation, the other is all fancy. The one was all reality, the other is all fiction. The one moved and had its being in nature, the other chooses the supernatural as its element. Goldoni was in no wise literary ; Gozzi is pre-eminently bookish. Goldoni laboured to conform to the rules, Gozzi taxes his ingenuity to appear formless. Goldoni was the servant of truth, Gozzi acknowledges no mistress but poetry. Goldoni claimed to make the world moral, Gozzi thinks only of entertaining it. His *fiabe* or *fole* or *favate* are nothing but unprofitable fairy-tales ; pretty fairy-tales which he chooses to recount to the people of Venice, whose old age has brought them a second childhood.

No more of that insipid tittle-tattle, wriggling along the ground among booths and taverns and *traghetti* ; enough of the trivial prose of the lower classes, which is on a level with their mud-coloured hovels and their pigmy interests ; away with these pot-bellied citizens, women with print aprons, sidewalk elegances ! to the devil with your Truth—foolish, dull, senseless, as stupid as life, as vulgar as the street-corner, picked up by hook or by crook, begged for in shreds, slavishly brought home ! But far away, beyond, in the infinite, is all that the mind invents in freedom, all the poetry and bliss of old nursery-tales ; castles in the air, exquisite fibs, adorable nonsense !



We are in the land where everything happens, where the Blue Bird nests. Talking doves, kings transformed into stags, and beggars into kings ; people's skulls drying on the point of spears thrust in party-walls ; quaint customs, like the Chinese of kneeling down and knocking one's forehead on the ground ; statues which laugh at the lies women tell ; stairways which have forty million seven hundred and two thousand and four steps ; tables which appear ready laid in the desert, voices proceeding from them, and the desert changing to a beautiful garden at the accents of an invisible symphony. The *dramatis personæ* are kings of countries and kings of a pack of cards, enchanted princesses, wizards, necromancers, ministers, viziers, dragons, birds, profiles from the Piazza, and also the four masks of the famous Sacchi company—Tartaglia, Truffaldino, Brighella, and Pantaloon. In her palace, which grew in a night, the pretty Barberina grieves ; she grieves because, though she has received all the good things of the earth without the ghost of an effort, she has not in one hand the golden water which dances and sports, in the other the apple that sings. Norando, Prince of Damascus, appears mounted on a sea-monster. Dilara shows a goat's-foot beneath her dress. A bull scatters fire from his horns and his tail. A dragon sheds tears as big as walnuts. A serpent with flaming jaws rears itself out of a tomb. A galley comes up and lets off cannon-shots. Pantaloon as Admiral, erect on his ship's deck, whistles thrice, and the convict-crew reply each time by a unanimous howl. Barbaric marches are heard, the rolling of long drums muffled in crape, women's sobs and cries in the depths of a cave. Journeys to the moon are performed in the twinkling of an eye. The hunt sweeps through the forest with bears, stags, hounds, and reports of the arquebuse. Fierce battles take place with terrible Amazons, unsheathed scimitars, din and bloodshed. In the midst of a desert Truffaldino and Brighella discuss artistic drama ; under the boughs of



the trees Truffaldino and Brighella tell each other fairy-tales ; beneath a pavilion in the camp Truffaldino and Brighella exchange verses of Ariosto by moonlight ; and Tartaglia and Pantaloon, both in their shifts and holding their candles, quarrel at night in the Throne-room. Put your hand out of the tent, and it rains ink upon it. You are present at showers of blood and fire, falling on scenes of comic business ; storms and thunderclaps, earthquakes, whirlpools of flame into which two children are thrown alive ; apparitions, and portents, and marvels. And the more marvels there are, the better it is ; there is nothing plausible, nothing that could be reconciled with the miserable rules of common sense.

Where are we ? In what Utopian island ? In what forest, what country of sorcery ? What hitherto unknown city lifts its blue outline on the height ? What strange realm gives welcome to this jumble of humanity ? Whence come these turbans, these tiaras, these flat-nosed countenances, these plaited beards, these inimitable ceremonies, and other-world manners, and strange happenings ? We cannot say. We are Heaven knows where, a thousand leagues from earth, a thousand leagues from the three unities—the true, the rational, and the possible ; in the only land that matters, the land of paradoxes, the abode of topsy-turvy nature. Yet these folk know everything in Venice—who the astrologer Cingarello is, or the courtesan Saltarei, or the quack Masgomieri, or the mad Bettina. Barberina wears a creation of the Venetian tailor Canziani, and her hair is dressed by Carletti the Venetian artist. The cry of the flower-girl : "*Rosa pelae, zizole col confetto !*" has passed beneath the arches of dreamland. The little song of the street-boy has echoed on the castanets of the distant land :—

*"Ghi occhiali son caduti,  
Non vedo più le note ;  
Dindon, dindon, carote,  
Non c'è per voi pietà."*

And if a formidable onset is made beneath the walls of Tiflis, it is the newspaper-seller of the Piazza with his moth-eaten hat who, up on the stage, announces the result: "A new, glorious, and authentic account, describing and making known the great and bloody fight which has occurred beneath the walls of the city of Tiflis!" And the street-reciter Cigolotti, having become the servant of the wizard Durandart—who says to him, "Cigolotti, continue to live with your cassock of black cloth in holes, a woollen cap on your head, out at heels, only shaving once in two months, and earning your livelihood by telling tales on the great square at Venice"—this same Cigolotti appears in person at Roncesvalles with a parrot on his wrist. Enchanted islands, sea-shores, and gardens of beauty, throne-rooms "containing two cushions to sit on," or "a writing-desk," or "a sofa"; prodigious sentiments, unheard-of exploits, heroic verses; and, in the midst of all this fairyland—intimate, domestic, and on the spot—are Pantaloon, Tartaglia, Brighella, and Truffaldino!

Pantaloon is so full of sense, so judicious. He is not the fellow to think the moon is of green cheese, to look for a mare's-nest. He always brings out the exact word that is wanted; he utters it with the local accent, in the graceful dialect of Venice: "*Sioria . . . sta nonola . . . un cor negro.*" Flung in spite of himself into the midst of superhuman occurrences, he is in the greatest terror that he will catch some inflammation there, or get pimples on his face. He invokes curses on *sta sorte de amori*. He calls the bridegroom of a Hydra "one who has married beneath him." His head goes round "like a catherine-wheel," and, but for the sake of decency considering where he is, he would go and look for the vinegar-flask in the kitchen. When people talk of a wedding, he thinks not of *Raccolte* but of the stewed radishes which go with weddings in the story-books. "Old sluggard!" says Tartaglia to him; "you are like an infant of three-

score and ten." True it is that our friend is so constructed as to adore children; always running after their fair curls, always pricking their bright faces with his bristly beard. "Go to bed, naughty boy," he says to Prince Iennaro. How, then, can he believe in the treason of the prince who is haled to prison before his eyes? "Why, I know this young man; it was I who brought him up. He has always been the same open-hearted boy from childhood. He was never capable of telling a lie. If he broke a cup, or stole an apple, he never said: 'It was the cat,' or 'It was nurse.' He said straight out: 'Lady mother, it was me. Please forgive me; I won't do it again.'"

Truffaldino appears in turn under the guise of sausage-seller, head of the seraglio, tiger, modern philosopher, and turnkey. As the last, he is the guardian of the slave Zirna, gentle and faithful, at the bottom of a dungeon. In vain has he inflicted on her, to curry favour with his mistress, the most horrible tortures—for instance, putting a moustache on her with a bit of charcoal, giving her twenty-six thousand six hundred and thirty fillips on the nose, or even imposing on her three days of silence; Zirna obeys, and sings. She sings patiently, as she winnows, the little song which runs to the tune in *Irene*:—

*"Qual calma all' interno  
E mai l'ubbidire. . ."*

And in the foreground, as in an engraving of Tiepolo, lies a stick.

How many vicissitudes had Brighella, before he ended up as a dyer in the city of Samarcand! Heaven helps those who help themselves. He began as a stable-boy, then served as a flunkey, and, being dismissed for slapping his mistress's little dog which had spoilt his scarlet cloak, he set up as a baker. Heaven helps those who help themselves. His shop caught fire, and he was accused of arson; he escaped, wandered about the world, tried

a hundred expedients and failed in all—and here he is at Samarcand, at the beck of women who, having a yellow night-dress want it pompadour, and having a poppy-coloured petticoat want it lemon. Heaven helps those. . . .

Tartaglia wears a plaster on his stomach which spoils his appetite. When he is a king and has sorrows, he brays like an ass. His servant Truffaldino, on the contrary, enjoys the best of health, “equal appetite by day and night, before and after dinner, and regular in his habits, at your service.”

At one moment, fairies exchange verses in an under-wood of pliant verdure ; at another, a mob of rickety and shivering beggars quarrel over an alms at the door of a church. Ninetta, daughter of King Concul, is buried alive under the scullery sink, where the bird Belverde brings her a little bottle hanging from its beak. Truffaldino, with head bandaged and a big paunch, utters his whining litany : “ Who will give an alms to this poor invalid who can’t work any longer, *poveretto* ? Need I tell you my misfortunes, *poveretto* ? You can see them with your own eyes, *poveretto* ! I am dropsical, with a continuous fever for the last four years, *poveretto* ! Deserted by doctors and by mankind, *poveretto* ! ” On the skirts of the forest Pantaloon conceals his virtue and his daughter Sarché in a hut ; silly child, wanting to know what a town is like ! “ A town ? Six thousand women in *cargadura* ; twenty thousand flatterers from Paris, who make them still more wicked than they were before ; five hundred tradesmen weeping because they cannot do business in blood ; forty thousand people kissing and betraying each other ; three thousand thieves who would strip you of your last rag ; eight thousand who curse the gallows which stops them murdering at their philosophic pleasure ; and a hundred poor old men, whose virtue makes them ridiculous, preaching the fear of God, wisdom, and truth, lamenting over the state of morals, the para-

lysis of business, and the ruin of families. That's what a town is, my daughter ; shall we go and see it ? " Then there is the giantess Creonta in a tea-gown, in the depths of her castle defended by a rusty door, a rotten rope, and a hungry watch-dog ; and the baker's wife using herself as broom to sweep out the bakehouse ; and Renzo, in love with a statue.

The giantess Creonta speaks in verse as bad as the Abbé Chiari's. The stubborn Princess Turandot utters riddles in the tone of an Academician. Brighella, the poet, rapt with heavenly enthusiasm, improvises poems in the style of the *Raccolte* ; only, when the inspiration has blown over, he is a Philistine again and off to the tripe-shop. Pantaloon reveals himself under the guise of a Pyrrhonist philosopher gone mouldy. And Calmon, who lived four hundred years ago, who pretended to despise mankind, who would have torn his tongue out rather than give the name of heroism to the pious deeds of his brother-men, has felt his heart harden like stone, and has become a stone figure, a thing dead, an inert mass, a heavy body overthrown among the weeds. And yet, in the middle of the night, to the din of an earthquake, we see him rise and speak. " Love thyself," he cries, " and then by so doing thou wilt become what thou wouldst be ! " " Love thyself, and love others, and follow reason, which is no slave to the frail senses, but daughter of Heaven's decrees." And, " Raise thy snout from the earth, vile brute, look to the sky and the stars, nor let thy thought cleave to the ground, between the senses and nothingness ! "

We are at the Ogre's Hill ; at the Palace of the Golden Water which dances and sports ; at the court of the King of Coppe, whose son has become so sad that he has lost the grace of merriment, spits out putrid rhymes, and poisons martelliani with his breath. Truffaldino and Brighella, transformed into a tiger and a lion, discuss the intelligence of animals ; Truffaldino would enlist as a



soldier were it not that he thinks being a tiger is a more merciful profession. Renzo and Barberina, youthful and fair as the day, go off into the woods, one laden with a faggot, the other shouldering an arquebuse, both with book in hand ; for Renzo and Barberina have read deeply in the modern literature which is sold by weight at Venice, and which, by teaching men the intrinsic worth of human action, purges them of prejudices. There is Smeraldina, wife of the pork-butcher, who picked up these pretty children from the running water into which somebody had thrown them in an oil-cloth. She has suckled them, surrounded them with love, brought them up as her own sons ; but if she has thus sacrificed herself, it is through self-love ; if she has laboured day and night, it is through self-love ; if she has never slackened in her daily devotion and her unseen heroism, it is for the same reason ! Well-posted in the essence of things by their books, “ Smeraldina,” they say to her, “ go home and try to develop your reason, disentangle it from your senses, and employ it to curb your self-love ! ” Tartagliona is a wicked queen ; Gulindi an immodest queen ; Mezzafer, with his Turkish pipe, is a despotic king. Sinadab is all three at once, besides being a hypocrite into the bargain. He can’t keep a wife more than forty days, after which period he transforms her into a mare. Tartaglia admits that he has known people of the same behaviour at Naples, who, when they had satisfied their whim, sent the poor woman out to grass ; Pantaloon denies that there are such things at Venice, but will not take his oath to it. As in an old sonnet *alla burchia* of the Quattrocento, we see the silhouette of an old house or an old woman, one-eyed, hump-backed, mangy, dyspeptic, blear-eyed, full of disease, the quintessence of the almshouse. As in the luminous poem of a Ferrarese artist, Princess Dardané, disguised as a knight in bright armour, shield on arm, lance in hand, plume on crest, fights a furious duel with the Hydra. And

Truffaldino waits on Smeraldina under a parasol, both in Chinese dress, as in a fresco of Tiepolo at the Villa Valmarana.

Such is the *Amor delle tre Melarancie*, and the *Re Cervo*, and the *Zobeide*, and the *Pitocchi Fortunati*, and all these wildly nonsensical works.

It is satire on the manners of the age, on the prevailing tastes in letters, on the new philosophy and the new fashions. And, set against the Abbé Chiari's tragic-comedy, Goldoni's realistic comedy, progress, prose, and balderdash, it is the poetry of simple things.

And it is, beyond the Murazzi, at the point where the sea-line and the horizon of reality fade away, the fabulous East risen like a mirage, and the golden crest of its myths and its minarets, and the silver inlay of its doors opening on rose-gardens, and the blue enamel of its mosques, and its jewelled plumes, and the melancholy chant of its muezzins; prayers rising from mats, the fragrance from dishes of perfume, and, against the red-barred west, the outline of a camel laden with spices. It is the poetry of the past, the poetry of distance, And it is, moreover, the poetry of childhood; its love, its trust, its smile, its happiness, all its charm.

The child is so tiny, with his frail body, wrinkled and plump. The women handle him with their deft fingers, turning him this way and that, wiping his mouth, showing him to each other. "Oh, my little St. John!" they say. "Heavenly baby—darling little legs—you little wretch!—you little shrimp!—Come to me, my Paradise!" And, "Madonna, what a fiend! what a lump of quicksilver it is!" They amuse him with their hands:—

*"La Pimpinella la va, la vien. . . ."*

They jump him on their knees:—

*"Tru, tru, tru, tru, cavallo,  
La mama vien dal balo. . . ."*

They seize his little finger, and then the next, and the next, with

*"Questo g'à fato 'l vovo,  
Questo l'à messo in fogo,  
Questo l'à cusind. . . ."*

And beneath the leaves of the mulberry where the cicale sing, and by the blackened hearth where the cricket chirps, the grandmother for ever tells her tales ; one of those tales which begin, "Once upon a time," one of those tales where the same words are repeated like a refrain : ". . . And journey and journey . . . and run and run and run . . . and fish and fish. . . ." She tells one of those eternal tales which belong to all peoples and all races, which from all time and in every age have lulled and delighted the earliest childhood. The cicale sing, the cricket chirps, the grandmother tells her tales. And the child listens open-mouthed, keeping quite still, understanding, acquiescing, filling in the outline, carried away, absorbed, crouching motionless in his mother's lap, listening ; he smiles, he drops asleep ; and what began as a story goes on as a dream.

And at the S. Samuele theatre perukes and masks listen to-day like the child of old ; for whoever they be—procurator, or joiner, or spy, or violinist, or bookseller, or even turnkey—they were all children once, they all once sucked their thumbs, caught their feet in their hands, and sang themselves out of breath unconsciously. They all walked boldly on the road, holding tight to the fold of a skirt. They all felt a woman squeeze their nose in a handkerchief and say "Blow !" They all burst suddenly into shrill cries, trembled at the Ogre, and believed in wonderful weddings, celebrated with stewed radishes and peeled mice ; and they heard, by the fireside or beneath the mulberry, the old woman with the stories, whose voice to-day is still.

It is here that Carlo Gozzi has taken his position—at

the point where humanity is identical and of one mind, before the simple and translucent spirit has been complicated and tarnished, or the heart overladen and weary of letting in impressions ; when the soul opens to the light and is charmed with the beauty of the day. Like a grandmother, he lifts his forefinger and says : " Once upon a time." While Venice drops into slumber, lulled by the rhythm of her waters and the rhythm of her past ; while Venice forgets herself, and takes her delight, and will not know or take in or understand anything of the gathering masses of clouds, of the coming storm—Carlo Gozzi, helping her in her task of amusement and distraction, tells her fairy-tales.

Such are the *Pitocchi Fortunati*, the *Corvo*, the *Augellino Belverde*, and all the drama of nonsense, built on regrets and rancours and dreams.

Such at least is what he would have liked to do, and what he has not done.

The glory is still his of having given a sort of aftermath of novelty to the ancient Comedy of his country, which, at the moment when Goldoni and he appeared on the scene, was falling in ruins, and which, thanks to him and his modifications, almost as complete as his rival's, threw its last sparks of life at Venice.

And, after that, humanity changed its direction and grew more sombre for ever.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ADVENTURERS: CASANOVA

THERE are all sorts of nooks and corners and hiding-places ; the city is full of private staircases, secret doors, and clandestine abodes whose mystery not " jealousy herself " could spy out. In this maze of canals, this labyrinth of lanes, you might play a splendid game of hide-and-seek. And so Venice is the ideal city for adventures, the home for the adventurer.

Yes, that being peculiar to the eighteenth century ; that Proteus with his sudden transformations and his quick wits ; that Hermes, fertile in resource, and living on shifts ; that son of fortune and opportunity, who comes and goes, wriggles out and in again, has one foot everywhere, and always falls on his feet ; that supple and elusive figure, out of the current and on the brink, without locality or connection, without profession, and without roots—the adventurer, whose employment is life, and whose life is a romance—the adventurer finds himself at home in Venice.

You are going back to your bed in the evening, when a window opens, a voice says, " Ssh ! " a rope runs down, and, tied to the rope, a basket with a baby in it. You are at the café in conversation with the wits, when a boatman pulls you by the sleeve and leads you to a gondola moored in the darkness, in which you find not your lady-love but a fair unknown, trembling, crying out at your approach, yet letting you take her hands, and offer sherbet, and draw her story from her—a Neapolitan princess, if you please. You give twopence, at the Ridotto, to a poor fellow who leaves you his name scribbled on the back of



a card ; one day, when you have nothing better to do, you look him up and find him in a respectable house, well furnished, and lined with books, where he lives with his very pretty daughter ; he is a former student of medicine, who has adopted the profession of beggar in Venice and made ten thousand ducats by it, and who, because you have frequently given him an alms at the corner of the S. Gregorio bridge, and because your appearance pleases him, has made up his mind to select you as his daughter's husband. A clothes-seller is strolling about the *fondamenta* of Cà Corner, when a scarlet cloak accosts her and asks her to come with him to his master's house ; the shutters of the gondola, into which she confidently steps, are riveted to their fastenings ; her eyes are blindfolded with perfect politeness ; she is gagged, and after several turnings and windings is led into a room with cane furniture, where a masked seigneur is sitting by the side of a lady in white dress and black cloak, and a cassock is lurking behind a red curtain. Adventures comic, romantic, amorous ; adventures spring at every step from this land of the unlikely, this Cosmopolis of pleasure. They besprinkle life with the unforeseen, cross and recross their subtle threads, plan their stealthy intrigues, open their secret doors, light their nun's lamps, tiptoe along into mystery, and crouch behind the figure of Silence which is at the door, finger on lips, listening. Behind the rampart of the silken cape and hood, behind the smile of the indulgent inquisitor, how many improbable existences are there which have taken shelter and refuge here, in this city, which, according to the English writer Beckford, is " The city in the universe best calculated for giving scope to the observations of a devil upon two sticks," and where, according to the Italian adventurer Gorani, " an honest man may best hide ! " What a number of secrets, of equivocal profiles, of problematic faces, of uncertain pasts ! There is Law, going by the name of the Chevalier Desjardins, living by play, while

his brother is in the Bastille and his wife in furnished lodgings; the Comte de Bonneval, who, with a turban on his head and his legs crossed on a mat, prays to Allah, conspiring the while with the Turks, until the Three determine to poison him; Lord Baltimore, who travels with his physician, a seraglio of eight, and two negroes to keep guard over them; Ange Goudar, "a wit, a thief at the gaming-table, a police-spy, a perjured rascal, daring and ugly;" and his wife Sarah, once a waiting-maid in a London alehouse, wondrously beautiful, who in her palace at Posilipo receives the court society of Naples and holds it in subjection to her charms; disguised women, sham princes, levanting financiers, filchers of documents, blacklegs, men living by all trades including their wits, great lords with the spleen, and the kings out of *Candide*! A whole floating humanity of the gaming-house and the seaport, the swarming abundance of a decomposing organism, a vegetation of scum. The jealous sea has cleansed her pure robe of these strays; society has rejected these parasites. Venice gives them welcome, and protects them beneath her garment's hem.

Adventure is everywhere; the drama is a drama of adventures; the fashionable novels are novels of adventure; life is a life of adventure. In olden days the great merchants, on the decks of their galleys, used to go off on voyages of discovery; and the markets they opened up, the colonies they founded, the islands they won for their country, these were their regal adventures. To-day, the great-grandsons of Marco Polo entertain less extensive ideas, but the taste which drove their ancestors on wild and distant enterprises is still with them; they have inherited their spirit of initiative, their restless humour, their need of continual motion. They are impatient to start, to stir, to change their horizon and their abode. From being Conquistadores they have become adventurers, living naturally the life of a *Gil Blas*, a *Figaro*, or a *Tom Jones*; and their autobiographies, such as we

have of that age, are for the most part like *picaresque* novels.

There are the *Memoirs* of that strange creature Antonio Longo, a notary by profession, but also a poetical improvisatore, a playwright, a theatrical manager, secretary to a wealthy eccentric, a horse-doctor for a whim, and a tutor at Treviso ; who besides, after nearly becoming captain-adjutant to a Muscovite nobleman and fighting a duel with a grandee of Spain, comes out in the guise of a tale-writer, a compiler, and author of an immense literary undertaking, useful and agreeable, ecclesiastical and agriculturally economic. There are the *Memoirs* of the noble Pier Antonio Gratarol, an authentic son of the Golden Book, a grandee of Venice, and Secretary of State. After being travestied on the stage by the jealousy of Carlo Gozzi, he tears his red robe in vexation, crosses unauthorised the boundaries of Venetian territory, and has a price put on his head by the Republic ; and, after wandering from Brunswick to Stockholm, from London to Lisbon, from Lisbon to Baltimore, serving in the troops of the soldier of fortune Beniowsky, being stranded in Madagascar, and leading altogether a life of the utmost toil and distress, dies in obscurity. There are the *Memoirs*, too, of Lorenzo Da Ponte, the convert son of a Jew of Ceneda, priest, latinist, teacher of humane letters, tutor in the house of the Pisani, author of revolutionary verse, of psalms praised by Foscolo, and of Mozart's libretti. Accused by the Magistrato delle Bestemmie of eating ham on a Friday, he goes into banishment from Venice, leaving little intrigues of the gondola for Dresden, where he falls in love with the wife and two daughters of a painter all at once, and Dresden for Vienna, where he wins the favour of the Emperor Joseph II. as a playwright in rivalry with the Abbé Casti, and loses it in the matter of a singer. Having suddenly married a young Englishwoman, to whom he brought a fortune of five piastres, he traverses Holland, Belgium, and England,

goes bankrupt as impresario in London, sets up there as a bookseller, embarks for the New World with a box of violin-strings, commences in America as a grocer, and dies there as a teacher of Italian. There are also the *Memoirs of Goldoni*, whose wandering life is also the life of an adventurer, but of an adventurer who is an honest man. And there are the *Memoirs of Casanova*.

Casanova is an adventurer who soars high. With Cagliostro, he is the most conspicuous of Italian adventurers. He transgresses the bounds of his native country and belongs to Europe, which he has furrowed in all directions and exploited from top to bottom. No life was ever a greater jumble of incidents, no mind was ever such a mixture of opposite characteristics, no personality more equivocal than that of this enigmatic Janus—a riddle which to this day is not completely solved.

He was born at Venice on April 2nd, 1725, the fruit of a marriage which in itself was something of an adventure—his mother being a performer in Goldoni's plays, "beautiful as the day," and his father of a noble Spanish stock, transmitting to him a strain of the priest, the soldier, and the Latin satirist. He was brought up by a Venetian grandmother, who, when he suffered from hæmorrhage, took him to a sorceress for treatment. Introduced to intellectual life by Giorgio Baffo, a senator and writer of loose verses, and from an early age initiated into the frivolity and easy morals of the city of amusement, the youth was debonnaire, excessively clever, extremely unscrupulous, lively, talkative, and supple. Before he was twenty, he had already been a student at Padua, a young smooth-cheeked abbé at Venice, coadjutor to the Bishop of Martorano in Calabria, secretary to Cardinal Acquaviva at Rome, midshipman at Corfu, and finally, after his return home, violinist in the orchestra of the S. Samuele theatre. He had been expelled from a seminary, imprisoned in the S. Andrea



fortress, besieged in the Island of Casopo ; had learnt the tricks of sharpers and venal women, lost by the impudent hypocrisy of swindlers, He had learnt Horace by heart, and profited by a chemical formula to extract a large sum of money from a seller of mercury in business at Naples. And one day at the Villa Ludovisi, where he was engaged in the liveliest conversation with an advocate's wife whom he had met on his travels, a little snake rose in the grass and gazed at their diversions. "Look at the little fiend," said the young woman, "the most mysterious thing in nature ; admire him ; he is certainly either your Genius or mine."

One holiday morning at Venice, as he went down the steps of the Soranzo palace where he had been performing in the orchestra, he passed a senator who at that instant dropped a letter from his pocket. Quick as lightning, Casanova picked it up, carried it to his gondola, and got in with him. On the way, the senator had a fit of apoplexy. Casanova, after rendering first aid, planted himself resolutely at the bedside, never moved an inch away from him, made up his mind, and became a fixture. Now the noble Bragadin—"handsome, learned, witty, and of the mildest temper"—was secretly addicted (along with his two friends Dandolo and Barbaro, who, like himself, were patricians and bachelors, and, like himself, hated women and their ways) to occult practices. Convinced that his speedy recovery must be attributed to a supernatural cause, and, recognising in this unforeseen violinist, who had suddenly sprung into his line of vision, some angelic intervention, he found little difficulty in getting the wily offspring of actors to admit the impeachment. Casanova invented a tale on the spot ; he had received from an aged hermit on the mountain by Carpegna the secret of what the vulgar call the Cabala and what those learned in magic know as the Clavicle of Solomon. He proceeded to supply the most signal proofs, and repeated and multiplied them with



perfect ease ; till the three astonished old gentlemen became inseparable from this youth chosen by Heaven, who possessed the great magical endowment, and who confessed to them that death would overtake him three days after he should reveal his secret. Casanova was lodged in the Bragadin palace, with his place at table, a gondola at his orders, a valet to wait upon him, and ten sequins' pocket-money a month. "Be sure you enjoy yourself," added that very intelligent senator.

Well, Casanova was twenty, and the place was Venice. He followed this advice to the letter. Soaked in Horace, he is as impudent as a servant in the play, and has something of his drollery. He sows his wild oats, and scatters the fire which rages in him ; he indulges in the most dangerous pranks. He runs headlong through all the amusements of the secret city, lifting the last veil that covered it, till it lies bare as he describes it in his *Memoirs*. His youth is like a merry tale of the day, and, like such a tale, it is illustrated at every page by little elegant and libertine engravings. It is nothing but nights turned into day, gaming, late suppers, offerings to Chloris, impromptu verses, light-hearted enjoyment, short-skirted mythologies, and mischievous flirtations ; nothing but pretty faces, laughing lips, gleaming eyes, and charming dishabilles. The hour swoons beneath the ready caress and the fond embrace, while Love smiles.

Passing along the bank of the S. Giobbe, he spies a village dame in fine headdress, escorted by an old priest, in a gondola with two rowers ; immediately he springs into the gondola, enters into conversation, heads for Mestre, and attains his end. One October evening, as he is loitering about the streets in a mask, a young woman, well wrapped up, disembarks from the Ferrara diligence ; as she appears perplexed, he accosts her, hat in hand ; without much resistance, she follows him to the nearest café, and he straightway becomes the adviser, and soon

the lover, of this charming Bolognese countess, who has come to Venice to seek the man who deserted her. On his travels, he discovers a Frenchwoman disguised as an officer, and marvellously beautiful, under the escort of an old Hungarian captain ; he joins hands with her, separates her from her aged companion, follows in her footsteps, listens to her in raptures holding forth on philosophy and playing the violoncello at the court of Parma, and conducts her to Geneva, where the fair unknown, of whose history and position and name he is wholly ignorant, says an eternal farewell to him with her eyes full of tears, writing as she leaves him, " Never did so charming a dream last so long ! " At Venice, beneath the Colleoni statue, he waits for his first rendezvous with a free-thinking and free-living nun, a blue-eyed Messalina of twenty-three, bearing one of the most famous names in the Golden Book ; she appears alone, boldly, dressed as a gentleman, in a pink velvet skirted coat with gold spangles, black satin breeches, diamond rings and shoe-buckles, and an English pistol in her pocket ; changing later to fine Indian muslin, in the refined luxury of the *casino* to which Casanova leads her.

Like a wolf-cub, he buries his teeth in every fruit, forbidden and otherwise, tastes every pleasure, the high as well as the low, and treats himself to every amusement, even the learned. He has chosen Horace's *Aude sapere* as his motto ; he dares to do and to know everything. He belongs to the dissolute Venice that mirrors its rosy figure in the blue, and plunges into enjoyment as into the sea. He shares in the cosmopolitan elegance of its society, which turns this delightful spot into a fashionable sea-resort, a gaming-house, and an Opera-ball all in one. In the midst of the scandal he creates, he passes with his head high, compromising and exposing himself, afraid of nothing. At the Rinaldo Trionfante café, he reads out the lampoons he has composed and the names of the women who have been his victims. And all so

loud, with such impudence, such sovereign contempt for the most elementary proprieties, that after nine or ten years of this behaviour he has become suspect even to the most indulgent Republic on earth. One fine morning, the 25th of July 1755, despite the powerful protection of his three old friends, Messer Grande arrests "this man fertile in plots, accustomed to live at the expense of others, libertine, and a great card-player."

Imprisoned beneath the Leads, and condemned by a sentence of the supreme Tribunal to stay there five years, at the end of fifteen months he makes his famous escape, which is one of the great anecdotes of the eighteenth century, and which he takes two hours to recount. Henceforward, avoiding Venice, he moves unceasingly along the highroads of Europe, through the France of Mme. de Pompadour, the Spain of Aranda, the Portugal of the Count de Pombal, the England of the Georges, the Russia of Catherine, the Prussia of Frederic, and the Poland of Stanislaus; familiar with all the green-rooms and all the alcoves, all the deeps and all the shoals, all the chanceries and all the open squares, all the great houses and all the little. He passes unconcernedly from the royal palace to the hovel, from the splendid feast to the dark dungeon, from a drawing-room with gilded mouldings to an ambushade in a forest or a filthy garret. He knows the thousand and one figures of contemporary society; princes, cardinals, courtesans, actresses, ballet-dancers, officers, encyclopædists, occultists, Rosicrucians, Arcadians, philosophers, mummers, legates, and Jesuits. His *Memoirs* are the fullest gallery of contemporary portraits, the most complete museum of the pleasures and vices of the age, and the most searching revelation of its under side. He makes Benedict XIV. laugh till the tears come, and the Pope appoints him Knight of the Golden Spur and Protonotary Apostolic *extra urbem*. Frederic II. offers him a post as instructor to his cadet-corps in Pomerania. Catherine II. converses with him

about the reform of the Gregorian calendar. Stanislaus banters him about the *Satires* of Horace. At Stuttgart he is poisoned. At Warsaw Count General Branicki does him the honour to fight a duel with him. At Barcelona, being thrown into prison, he rapidly composes in pencil a refutation of the Frenchman Amelot de la Houssaye's *History of Venice*. Pranks, frolics, walls to be scaled, traps set and evaded, impostures, sword-thrusts, beatings, duels, prisons, gaming, study, and amours—these compose his life; and his carriage-wheels revolve with a perpetual motion. No one knows whence he comes, where he is going, what he is, what he does, how he lives, or what exactly is his name. He calls himself Casanova de Seingalt; and when a Roman prelate affirms that he is brother to the famous battle-painter Francesco Casanova, he replies with irritation that the painter Casanova is brother to him; and when the Burgomaster of Strasbourg asks him by what right he bears the title of Seingalt, he replies, "By right of the alphabet;" and when the Emperor Joseph II. expresses his contempt for those who purchase nobility, he impudently replies, "And what of those who sell it, sire?" He is very flexible, full of lightness and grace; he is, moreover, extremely touchy. He has a passion for astonishing people; scandal pleases him, danger exhilarates him, and difficulties give him amusement. From the moment a thing appears impossible, he undertakes to do it. He never gives way to despair. He makes up his mind and acts, "like a man who has said his prayers"—for "when a man has said his prayers," he tells us, "he feels confident, and acts."

He is, moreover, something of a braggart. He is high-handed, and proud in speech, laughing loud, in a rage over a trifle, calming down in a moment, and running on as before. He makes a parade of his connections, of his lace, his weapons, his jewels, his watches, his diamonds. He is one of those men who can fling a purse out of the window with an air. With a sword by his side, his breast



crossed by his order set in brilliants, clothed in pink or ashen-grey velvet, he comes boldly forward. He has an audacious front; putting up everywhere at the best inn; having his carriage, his household and outfit, his liveried servants great and small; and his valet, Le Duc, goes before him on the roads to prepare his way. He stakes a thousand ducats on a card, constructs his cabalistic pyramid, plays off a jest, plans an intrigue, gratifies a whim, and is off; as though possessed by the devil of motion, the dizziness of journeying, and the passion for change. Having never felt the desire of settling down (except one evening at Zürich when he was melancholy, and thought of taking orders) he is continually starting off again. Sometimes, indeed, he starts sooner than he likes, when some police-officer or Chevalier de Saint-Louis takes him aside and whispers a word in his ear.

At Florence he thrashes a Jewish impresario for breaking faith with a little opera-dancer whom he patronises. At Cologne he lays his stick about the shoulders of the journalist Jacquet for calling him an adventurer in his newspaper. At Vienna he fires a pistol and takes off one of the curls of a stubborn physician, who wanted to bleed him in his own despite. In the library at Wolfenbüttel he spends a delightful week going through a series of documents on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* never examined before by any scholiast, not even the great Pope. At Madrid an unknown lady calls him from her balcony, leads him to a great bed shut in with curtains, and showing him her lover whom she has just stabbed, begs him to throw the body into the river. At Solothurn, he plays the Ecossaise in the drawing-room of the French embassy. At Naples he discovers an unexpected daughter. Choiseul recommends him to d'Affry; Louis de Muralt owes to him his membership of the Arcadians; the Abbé Gama mentions his name for a secret mission to the Congress of Augsburg. Anton-Friedrich Büsching plagiarises from him shamelessly in



Vol. XX. of his *Geography*. Metastasio at Vienna, Jean-Jacques at Montmorency, the Marquis d'Argens at Aix, Orelli and Pestalozzi at Zürich, Haller at Laroche, Voltaire at Les Délices, all were visited by this eternal wayfarer, covered with the dust of every road. It is Crébillon who teaches him French ; he learns it so quickly that, by his own account, he made certain phrases fashionable : " Ah ! la grosse boule ! Ah ! le cher bonhomme ! Drôle de tête ! " He resorts to Fontenelle, telling him he has hastened from Italy in order to see him : " Confess, Monsieur," answers the sly nonagenarian, " that I have had to wait a long time for you ! " and at Berne, if he amuses himself with the unmentionable establishment of La Matte, he also dines with fourteen or fifteen senators, " rejoicing in the pleasure of being a man, in a company where everything did honour to mankind."

When he has no money left, he pays his way with audacity. He plies all trades, without one of his own ; a spy at Dunkirk, a dealer in government bills at Amsterdam, a theatrical manager in Germany, founder of a cotton-printing factory in Paris. Wholly ignorant of the science of finance, he sketches in the presence of Pâris-Duverney a plan for the royal lottery, which according to his own account is adopted. He goes in for mathematics, and composes a memorial on the corollary to the duplication of the hexahedron ; for history, and, besides his *Refutation of Amelot de la Houssaye*, he devotes three volumes to the Polish disturbances ; and for poetry, translates the *Iliad* into Italian octaves. He is a novelist, and in his *Icosameron* he relates the wondrous adventures of Edward and Elizabeth in the land of the Megamicrians. As for philosophy, he busies himself on a systematic refutation of Voltairianism ; and he makes excursions into the drama, works of erudition, of morality, theology, history, and criticism ; so much so that a considerable total of publications bear his name, along with all kinds of dialogues, essays, lampoons, legal statements, plans, projects,

and poems still unpublished, and even a *Treatise on Modesty*. He touches everything. Like Gil Blas, he has "the universal tool." Remembering that "the most hissed actor is he who stops short," he never stops short. He trims his sail, wheels his chariot about, seizes opportunities by the forelock, takes the wind while it is favourable, labours, strives, wriggles, worms his way in, gets hold, clings on, holds himself up, gleams, shines, and blazes; never more daring than when he is at bay in a corner, never more resourceful than when fortune has turned her back.

In 1774, having recovered favour with the Inquisitor, he settles down at Venice to the profession of a spy. After nine years, having attacked the noble Grimani, who has dared to incur his wrath, in an allegorical romance, *Ne' amori ne' Donne*, he finds himself compelled again to tread the path of banishment. He wanders about the world afresh, tempts fortune afresh, and begins life for the twentieth time. Until at last, having met at Töplitz the Count von Waldstein, who is addicted to magic, he is carried off by him to his castle of Dux in Bohemia, where, after many vicissitudes, fights, worries, lawsuits, pranks, escapades, squabbles, writings, and confusions, he dies on June 4th, 1798, a librarian.

He was a tall man, supple, and lean, sunburnt like a Bergamasque, nose like an eagle's beak, eyes full of fire. And the young wife of Da Ponte, meeting him on her honeymoon, was left amazed at "the eloquence, the flow of speech, the vivacity, and all the ways of this extraordinary old man."

In the course of the eighteenth century, lives so full of movement are not uncommon. Not to cite the Italians,—Alberoni, Marsigli, and Gorani—we have instances in Law and Bonneval, Grammont and Beaumarchais. The thing that gives the Venetian Casanova his distinctive character is the motive power of his career.

There is nothing of the vulgar adventurer about him. Why, a vulgar adventurer has most often some idea at the back of his head, he nurses some scheme or follows some design; his business is to smuggle himself into society and to succeed there at any cost; care for his fortune or his ambition ranks at the summit of his interests; by every means, and principally by the bad, he must get there. Not so with Casanova. For him—amusement. Devoid of any kind of calculation, unconsidering in the highest degree, and without any line of conduct, since he is the very spirit of recklessness in person, he cares only to amuse himself. He never reflects, or foresees, or dissembles, or puts up with anything; all impulse, quick as a spring, spontaneous as lightning, he gives the rein to his whim, his pride, or his anger, darts off in the train of the moment, and plucks the flower of present joy. He is an embodied appetite, let loose on the high-road. For this “interesting madcap,” to satisfy, to divert, to please himself, is everything.

Yes, the thing is fairly clear. With no assured resources except magic and play, he lives by swindling, and his swindles plainly call for the gallows. They are of the class of “brimstone tricks”; like good practical jokes, with a smack of the stage, and that genteel artifice whose master the Greeks called *Cerdaleophron*. Never did Scapin invent merrier stratagems to squeeze pistoles out of G ron te. We saw how at Venice he gains admittance to the intimate circle of the three cabalists, and treats them to the extraordinary tale about the mountain of Carpegna. Let us look at him in Padua, where he is introduced to an ecclesiastical dignitary, who owns, among his collection of curious antiquities, the actual knife which Simon Peter used to cut off Malchus’s ear; Casanova persuades him that to possess the knife is nothing, without the precious sheath which covered it, mentioned by God Himself in the words, “Put up thy sword into the sheath;” and then immediately manu-

factures the sacred relic out of an old boot picked up in the inn-yard, and equips it with an official document establishing its authenticity, which document he forges with the aid of a dictionary in the municipal library. Let us look at him in Paris, where he makes the old Marquise d'Urfé solemnly and seriously believe that he will transform her into a little boy, conceived of the daughter of an adept by a marvellous process known only to the Knights of the Rosy Cross. The comedy is played out at Aix-la-Chapelle, where, in the recesses of a mysterious garden, he leads the white-haired dowager to a bath exposed to the rays of the moon ; he burns spices, recites invocations, pronounces formulas. They despatch a letter to the moon, and patiently await the answer, which shortly appears in letters of silver on the face of the lustral water. Here and elsewhere, all through these laughable conceptions—which, indeed, are eminently profitable and translate themselves into hard cash—Casanova is first of all amusing himself, satisfying his comic fancy, doing sacrifice to the god of laughter. He forgets, and we forget along with him, the end of his pursuit in the drollery of the means.

He was clearly, and we must admit it, a lady's man, living by the sex and introduced into society by them ; so that men usually figure in his life as companions of pleasure. After all, he loves women passionately. They are to him not a means but an end. He will worship their grace before he thinks of turning it to advantage. Sometimes he devotes himself even to the pitch of sacrifice for their sake. He has it in him to commit the worst indiscretions in their honour, to compromise his fortune, to ruin his prospects, to throw over the most enviable and the most laboriously-won situations. Love is his foremost business, his greatest enjoyment ; no one served it more faithfully, or showed himself more enamoured, or yielded to a more youthful strength of desire, than this grandson of Aretino, with the burning imagination of a



reckless boy. Accordingly the greater number of his adventures are amorous adventures. Peasant or patrician, nun or courtesan, child of a doorkeeper or child of the Golden Book—he cares little whence the charmer springs ; the essential thing is that he should be in love with her (for sometimes he disdains the most famous beauties), and that he should make her love him, for violence is repugnant to his theories. He flutters from one to the other like an insect from flower to flower. “ Monsieur l’Ambassadeur,” said La Barbarigo to the Abbé de Bernis when she took leave of him, “ be sure that I shall always be constant to you and never faithful.” Casanova, on the contrary, “ is never faithless and always inconstant,” having towards all the same primary and elemental feeling, stripped of its veils, deprived of its modesty, but as sincere as it is strong, as ardent as it is natural. He loves them for their pretty faces, for their hidden loveliness, for their alluring brilliance ; and also for their charming prattle and the attractions of their intelligence ; for with him the understanding sits at the feast of Cythera, and, by his account, “ without the pleasure of speech, the pleasure of love does not deserve the name of pleasure.”

Also, we must confess, his amusements were of an ignoble kind ; his exploits are disreputable, and his *Memoirs* a sort of scandalous chronicle. “ My history,” he writes, “ is that of a bachelor whose principal business has been to cultivate the pleasures of sense ; I had no more important occupation ; ” and, when a Hanoverian lady questioned him as to his calling, he replied, “ Madame, I am a libertine by profession.” And yet, while he thus slanders himself, he is boasting. For he has other pleasures. Properly speaking, there are no pleasures unknown to him, even that of amusing himself with the ignorance of Jean-Jacques (who thought Russian was a jargon derived from the Greek), and of laughing in Switzerland at the absurd Latin on the ossuary of Morat. If Messer Grande, at the moment of arresting him in



Venice, finds at his bed-head the *Portier des Chartreux*, he also finds Petrarch and Ariosto. If at the card-table he joins hands, share and share alike, with one Croce, "an arrant improver of the luck," he can also enjoy remembering the people he has made happy. And if, under the rose, he gives himself over to diversions worthy of the pencil of Albano, yet in the heart of Magna Græcia he is in raptures over the memory of Pythagoras, in presence of the ruins of Saguntum he is moved to weeping, and at Vacluse he covers with kisses and bathes in tears the remains of the house of Laura. Gasparo Gozzi was wrong in maintaining that nothing but "ingratitude and assurance" could be expected of him; he relishes the lofty delight of giving charity, and the pleasure of respecting poverty, of showing a proper contempt for the usurer and the pander, and of condemning adultery which hurts his "Christian feelings." Though connected by all sorts of suspicious links with the blackguard, the cheat, and the rascal, and though joining covertly in their orgies, this blackguard entertains himself with literature, this cheat plumes himself on knowledge, this rascal shows the most polished wit. He has a feeling for convention, and is quite capable of flinging his plate in the face of an impostor; he has religion, and has never been wanting in the pious practice of praying to God after Petrarch's fashion,

*"Con le ginocchie della mente inchine."*

And, if he has no morals, he has taste. He indulges himself in every luxury, including gentlemanly opinions and aristocratic criticisms. Voltaire's *Pucelle*, the Abbé Casti's tales, Rousseau's cynic propensities, all these labour under his disapproval; he will not call his *Memoirs* "Confessions," since Rousseau has sullied that fair name; Voltaire, "making you laugh as snuff makes you sneeze," and unable throughout "to distinguish the religion of the Gospels from religion as distorted by human agency," is lacking (he tells us) in moral earnestness. He pro-

fesses moderate, liberal, and rather timid opinions in literature, politics, and economics ; deplores the excesses of which the French Revolution was guilty, takes decidedly the side of the ancients in Mme. Dacier's controversy ; stands for the doctrines of free exchange and free-will ; disapproves of taxing the necessities of life ; is well-informed, knowing, and in the swim of events ; knows the proper things, likes the proper things, and is capable of discussing Iamblichus on the spur of the moment ; and this pillar of the gaming-house, this priest of Venus Libitina, enjoys the supreme pleasure, though quite unworthy of respect, of being a " respectable man," or passing as such.

To him everything is pleasure, and productive of pleasure ; everything is sport, ease, mirth. Everything seems amusing to him, and does amuse him ; study and debauchery, danger and card-playing. He is as well pleased to work as to pray ; to set himself to the solution of the Deliac problem at Dux, as to initiate a fair theologian into the mysteries of Cypris at Geneva ; to contemplate at Rome a timid maiden, " confused and blushing like one who doubts," as to cast the horoscope of Mlle. Morin at Grenoble and predict to her Louis XV.'s favour ; to converse with Voltaire at Les Délices about Algarotti, martellian verse, and macaronic poetry, as to brave the vigilance of German soldiers at Stuttgart, pistols in hand and hunting-knife between his teeth. In the same way he is as ready to lend his garments to La Tintoretta, as to read Petau's *Rationarium Temporum* under the Leads ; to fasten gold-embroidered garters on a patrician maiden of sixteen in a Venetian garden, as to observe in Russia, in the park of the great Catherine, the bust of an old woman inscribed with the name of Avicenna ; to teach the young Irene to cheat at cards, as to put down a disrespectful countryman at the Opera in Paris. " He is a man," reported Manuzzi the spy, " whose main and sole business is to amuse himself at all costs."

The remarkable and almost inconceivable thing is, that he succeeds in doing it. He amuses himself quite unflinching. He is never bored for an instant. He is not only without remorse, he is without satiety. He is not only without weariness, he is without apprehension. He is not only without horror at his doings, he smiles at himself. "I like myself," he declares. He is insatiable, never cloyed. He uses time, and time cannot use him up. He forgets to grow old. The world which his purpose has created does not seem to him void ; he does not hold our planet "the cesspool of the universe," like Voltaire ; he does not think himself pitiable for never finding his pleasures tedious. He will reach the end of his career very much in the same mind, without an instant of self-reproach or mistrust. Nobody ever enjoyed less by the spirit. Nobody ever satisfied more animal appetites and fewer moral aspirations. Nobody ever decked sensuality with more grace, intelligence, and relish, or found greater resources in it than he. Nobody ever so gave himself up to living, lived so materially, so intensely, as this impenitent voluptuary, who would not own to more than a single lost day in his life—the day when, after a night of revelry, he slept thirty hours on end. And nobody ever suffered less, was a worse host to sorrow, or escaped more entirely from the inevitable woe of destiny, than this furious pleasure-seeker, incapable even of "conceiving the possibility of misfortune," and confessing only to a single affliction—a disease that he had contracted under the Leads.

In the Quattrocento, he would have been a petty tyrant somewhere. Later, he would have been a prince of the Church. Later still, a soldier of fortune. Being born at Venice, the city of pleasure, and living in the eighteenth century, the age of pleasure, he is pleasure's knight. For pleasure is the means of his success and of his advancement. In his company, people forget whatever is muddy in his past and whatever is sinister in his

trade, and care for nothing but his wit, his anecdotes, his spirit, his merry laughter, the gaiety he diffuses, and the example of cheerfulness he sets. He amuses others as he does himself ; if he is in the carriage with you, it is impossible to yawn for a single instant ; and so you open the door to him ; and this parasite of life, who is nothing and nobody, without money or rank or profession, comes to the front. He is the friend of the Prince de Ligne, who considers him “ an uncommon man, a valuable acquaintance, even worthy of consideration and affection.” He is the friend of the Count von Lamberg, who calls him “ a man of profound acquirements.” He is the friend of the Count von Waldstein, who gives him a home in his castle. He is in continuous correspondence with some of the most genuinely distinguished personages in contemporary Europe. He is himself a personage of the time. And this extraordinary fortune of his is not only a sign of the age, it is a triumph for Venice, the city of frivolity, farce, and enjoyment, which believed that merriment could break through all doors, thought love a game, and called life a holiday. It was not content to draw the dying old world to its display of fireworks ; it produced a Casanova.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE BOURGEOIS

HOWEVER, Venice has not only her marvellous Piazza, of which Petrarch wondered long ago "whether the circle of the world possesses its equal"; not only her splendid façades reflecting their elegant forms in the dead water; not only the men of pleasure and the men of talent, the virtuosi, the *zentildonne*, and the adventurers.

There is also the Rialto, with its banks, its shops, its exchange, where sit the magistrates presiding over commerce, where at dusk the bell of the Realtina sounds the release from work, and where, in an atmosphere of labour, traffic, and tar, the crowd hastens on its business. Around *campi*, at the far end of courts, along narrow lanes of a conventual silence by the water's edge, there are dark houses, with low ceilings, gloomy apartments, unlit by any smile, unadorned with arabesques, unhaunted by musical trills; and in these houses live the bourgeois.

The traveller with buckled shoes who comes to Venice knows nothing of them. But what does such a man know of Venice? He has been to the cafés, to the theatres, to the Ridotto. He has been taken to hear the orphans of the Scuole, to visit the Arsenal, to admire the Treasury, and to inspect the manuscripts and the marbles at the Library under the guidance of Morelli. He has presumably attended a regatta, a musical mass, and a procession. Perhaps he has looked at the famous collection of casts in the house of the Farsetti, and, taking his authority too readily, like the astronomer Lalande, "from the accounts of those ciceroni who for thirty sous



a day sell to foreigners the learning of antiquity and the manners of peoples," has brought home from his travels a description in which he fancies that he has understood everything. Yet he has seen nothing of the bourgeois.

Dwellings hermetically closed ; interiors with every chink stopped ; minds shut fast ; modest manners, and dress of the colour of dead leaves ; horn snuff-boxes filled with Padua snuff ; prudence from the soil, scented with proverbs—a whole humanity rises to view in the background, very gray and very quiet. For, in this rose-coloured city with its chorus of frivolity, there are little existences sheltering behind the wall ; there are sequestered privacies hiding in the shadow ; there are small folk, simple folk, who know the value of a farthing and the value of a moment, and who, when they see a speck of dust on anything, blow it off.

These people live in seclusion, outside and around the Piazza, whose uproar belongs in their eyes to another class, almost to another country, like a forbidden precinct. Scarcely are they reminded from time to time—by the tinkling of a bell, a quavering note on the violin, or a burst of laughter, intrusive sounds which have strayed as far as their doorways padded with silence—that in the distance a whole world of folly is unrolled. They have no share in it, they know nothing of it ; nothing, or very little, of the *Nina pazza per amore* which is being played at S. Mosè, nothing of the mauve tea-gown shown by the "French Puppet" in the Merceria, nothing of the petty scandal which is exciting everybody in the companies where ices are served. Within their memory, there are no long ribbons floating gracefully, no resounding series of musical flourishes, no frolicsome Love on the peak of a gondola, clasping his pretty foot in his hand. The little women who halt, laughing, before the shed of the marionettes are no friends of theirs. Using neither amber powder nor gold lace, they do not breathe the atmosphere of the world. To go into twenty houses

simply in order to come out again, to pose and twist, to admire the grace of one's own leg, to practise whistling a ballet-tune, to listen to what one has just heard as if it were a novelty, to speak without having anything to say, to feel bored with the person one is boring—oh ! unhappy creatures who are so employed ! They have no intercourse of visits and company with such persons ; they mistrust this elegance and this finery ; they would not expose themselves amid this rustle of silk, this circle of lights, or risk being matter for laughter behind those fans. If their daughters picture Paradise as something similar, they are silly girls. Should a foreigner ask them who La Bastardella is, and whether it is true that La Cellini, accused of scandalous intimacy with a Turk, was proved to be innocent ; however genuine their desire to accommodate the gentleman traveller, they will be at a loss how to reply. This kind of news is none of theirs. The news they care for is the arrival of a ship in the harbour, or the rise in price of some commodity in the market, or some preacher's Lenten sermon. Their information is that of the *Gazette* or the *Prices Current* ; they know what it is useful to know—the rate of exchange, the price of grain, the cost of food, what houses are to let, what articles have been lost in the streets, who has been through the bankruptcy-court, and what coin is legal tender. Business is business, and theirs seems pretty well. They mistrust youth, take a pinch of snuff, cite an adage, and tease a magpie with their fat finger through the bars of his cage. They typify the security of those who keep their accounts, material and mental, by double entry. Also they know about eclipses ; when one is advertised, they go out on the Riva with the crowd, and gaze at it through smoked glasses.

Far from the mob, nestling round the parish churches, are the quaint corners where they live ; homes lasting long and well cared for, where life runs to the song of a rope-maker, the rumble of a neighbouring organ, and the

psalmody in the choir. Go in, and you find their furniture and their cares alike in the appointed place ; the arrangement of their rooms and their thoughts continue as of old ; a cat purring on a straw-bottomed chair, a little tarnished mirror framed in walnut, a smell of the wax taper. The father has come home from the Rialto, and in his *mezà*, precise and orderly, is finishing his accounts : “ 217 and 7 is 24, and 5 is 29, and 3 is 32, and 4 is 36, put down 6 and carry 23.” In the sitting-room, just by the window to catch a gleam of daylight, the daughter is modestly hemming an apron. The mother is knitting, and clears the ash from her brazier or scratches her head with the needle ; crossed kerchiefs and high wimples, in the delicate twilight. *I batte*, a knock ! Here comes the dustman, or the baker’s boy, or the second floor’s maid, cup-in-hand, to borrow a little sugar—somebody or other, with whom you exchange a word—bringing a small distraction, breaking the monotony of the quiet hours ; and then comes a neighbour or an old friend, a cheerful guest and discreet recipient of confidences. Cries, greetings, an eager welcome ; take a seat ! and you must have just two fingers of Malvoisie, in a nice clean glass. And then, in a stream of soft Venetian consonants, the conversation runs on, interrupted by compliments, curtsies, cries with clasped hands, glances up to heaven, sighs, proverbs, and complaints about these hard times. In these hard times, it appears, you can’t trust anybody ; in these hard times maid-servants are nothing but hussies ; in these hard times, children have no respect for their elders, and wives no intelligence ; in these hard times all these fits of the vapours come from drinking so much coffee and chocolate and other drugs, which do nothing but put the stomach out of order ; in these hard times, French chefs have poisoned Venetian cooking with all their gravies and essences and wine-sauces ; in these hard times the price of provisions has become really too outrageous ; and in

these hard times (as Zanetti tells us, under date May<sup>1</sup>12th, 1743) "four pounds of green peas fetched thirty-four francs."

They have their own decorum and habitual good-breeding ; holding their hand before their mouth when they cough, and saying *felicità* when a neighbour sneezes. Now the visitor takes leave, with the same compliments as before on both sides. . . . "*Riverisco i loro signori. . . . Serva umilissima. . . . Patron mio riverito. . . . Perdonino se mi sono preso l'ardir di venirli a incomodar.*" And then, the visitor gone, silence falls again ; and you hear anew the song of the rope-maker, the rumble of the organ from the church, and the canons' psalmody in the choir.

When they have slipped the ring of their purse over the lately-earned halfpenny, they smile slyly ; they wear their locks in a queue, and little triangular hats without lace ; and detest trailing sashes, poetry-books, and waste of time. To their mind, it is madness to spend a hundred thousand Venetian lire on a diamond shoe-buckle. Their wives are fond of haggling when they shop, and the tradesman will inquire about their health, and how the children are getting on at school.

At times they are proud to the point of absurdity ; all thorns and prickles ; brusque, snappish, and vicious ; "bears and satyrs," as rough and tart and bilious as the four *Rusteghi* of Goldoni. Old Maurizio, for instance, who makes his son Filipeto go about with a servant to look after him, though he is old enough to marry ; or Simon, who forbids his wife to receive any callers, even her own nephew ; or Lunardo, who will marry his daughter without letting her know to whom : "Listen to me ; in presence of my wife, who takes your mother's place, in presence of these two gentlemen and their ladies, I inform you that you are betrothed." You should hear these savages uttering abuse, when the doors are closed and the bolts shot. "You are right, old friend, in these days there

are no young people such as we were. You remember ? We did just what our fathers wished and nothing else." And some of them say : " I had two married sisters. I don't suppose I saw them a dozen times in my life."

" I hardly ever spoke a word, not even to my mother."

" I don't know to this day what a stage-play is, or an opera."

" Well, they took me to the opera by force one evening, and I slept all through."

" When I was a boy, my father said to me, ' Shall I take you to see the newcomers, or shall I give you a penny ? ' And I chose the penny."

" And I used to save up my presents, and add my farthings together, and that way I got a hundred ducats, and I put them in the fours, and I get four more ducats to my income ; and when I draw those four ducats, it gives me such delight as I couldn't say—not out of avarice, not for those four ducats themselves, but because I can say to myself, ' There's what I earned when I was a little boy.' "

" Show me one of the young people doing like that nowadays ! They simply fling money out of the window—shovelfuls."

" It's not only the money they waste, they go to the bad every way."

" And what's the reason of all this ? Why, liberty ! "

" That's it, sir. In these days, they hardly know the way to put on their own breeches, before they begin hanging around."

" And who is it teaches them, pray ? It's their mothers."

" Oh, don't speak of it. I have heard such tales ! . . .

" Yes, I'll tell you what they say—they say, ' Ah, the poor little thing ! Let him have his fun, then ; do you want him to die of grief ? If visitors come, they call him up : ' Come to me, my pet. . . . Just look at his complexion, Madame Lucrezia ! Isn't it lovely ? . . . If



you only knew how clever he is. . . . Now, my treasure, sing us your little song, repeat your nice speech of Truffaldino ! . . . I oughtn't to say it, but he can do really everything, dance, play cards, compose sonnets. . . . Do you know, he has got a sweetheart ! he says right out that he wants to marry ! . . . Yes, he is rather pert, but that'll wear off ; he's so very young, isn't he ? He'll get wiser in time. . . . Ah ! you little treasure ! Come, darling, come along and give this lady a kiss. . . . ' There, think of that ! What a shame and a disgrace ! The senseless women ! ' "

But more often they are merry ; they would not belong to Venice if they were not. Their austerity is tempered with a smile, so that sometimes the most frowning visage will open out in a thousand little lines, like a rosy apple left in the cupboard by mistake. They are no enemies to seemly amusement ; they relish enjoyment, provided it is lawful. Their pleasures are modest, but all the more genuine for that. As on their horizon floats the steam from their *polentina*, so their universe of thought is capped by a jest. They may detest modern cooking, but they can show a proper appreciation of a well-roasted slice from the loin. They may shun the theatres, the *casotti*, the marionettes, the Piazza, and the Liston ; but they are quite ready for a game of *tondina* or *meneghella* or *mercante in fiera*, limited to small stakes. They may not concern themselves with *chiassetti*, *pachietti*, buffooneries, childish fun, and such nonsense ; but they allow themselves, only not too often, such recreations as a good comedy at carnival-time, or a little private dance, just the family and the *Orbi di Piazza*, or, when spring comes round, a country excursion, with wife and walking-stick, and dinner in a basket. Our rough and prickly gentlemen, whom their wives call crab-apples, are not persistently ill-humoured. They know something of the graces of life, and they can enjoy their money.

" They say we aren't capable of enjoying our money."

"The fools! Do they think they can see into our heart? Do they suppose there's no pleasant society beside their own? Oh, my friend, it is a great delight to be able to say, I have got as much as I need, I want for nothing, and if need be I can lay my hand on a hundred sequins."

"Why, yes, sir—and eat well; fat capons, fine pullets, and excellent loin of veal."

"Yes, and well cooked, and cheap, too, because you pay as you go."

"Yes, and in your own house, without bustle and noise, and without anybody else poking his nose in."

"Yes, and nobody knows about our affairs."

"Yes, and we are masters in our own house."

"Yes, and we aren't ruled by our wives."

"Yes, and our children behave as children ought."

"Yes, and my daughter has had such a good bringing up, too. . . ."

"Well, I expect you to supper this evening; all I say is, there'll be four sweetbreads."

"Then we'll eat them."

"And have a good time."

"And be merry."

"And then they'll call us savages!"

"Pooh!"

"What apes they are!"

They are familiar with the Rialto square, and all the warehouses. They rub shoulders with consuls, clerks, agents, writers, porters, and masters of ships. They live by the traffic and industry of the sea. They are sellers or weavers of gold-cloth. They still have ships plying to Spain and back to fetch them wool. Such little ground as they own out in the country is not a luxury, but a source of income by its produce.

In the old days they did not count—no more than a fig counts, or a mite. The only folk who did count, who

engrossed the intellectual as well as the political life of the Republic, were the scarlet-robed dignitaries, humanists as well as citizens, at once the learned and the wise of Venice. From all time, says the Doge Foscarini, "the same names had administered the Republic in the wisdom of Counsel, and glorified it by the profession of Fine Arts;" and the families of Giustinian, of Barbaro, and of Bembo, had patriotism and talent in dynasties; and those, like Titian or Aretino, who were not noble, yet lived in their palazzi like noblemen; all united in the lofty purpose to show forth a soul of magnificence amid the splendour of pillars and the pomp of purple draperies; while Pantaloon, representing the bourgeois order and wearing its apparel, was the *cagh' in aqua*, mocked at throughout.

But the Bourgeois, they count to-day. They are beginning to rise above the horizon, and, becoming conscious of their just claims to consideration as the workers, the traffickers, and the earners, they demand the right of speech to set out their thought. They assert themselves even in the intellectual life of the city, and stamp it with their character. From their ranks is recruited the larger part of contemporary talent, from the worthy Goldoni, son of a bourgeois, to Count Algarotti, brother of a grocer, or even the two Gozzi, divided by an abyss from the illustrious nobility of Venice. Some of them may work in palaces or shine in drawing-rooms, but most of them remain loyal to the mind of their class. They give open expression to the temperate, modest, and exact genius of their order, with its warm lining of integrity and good-nature, its touch of sprightliness and sly wit. They diffuse a familiar and homely spirit, so that, when you look into their work, say a play of Goldoni's, or a picture of Longhi, or an article in the *Osservatore*, you are astonished, and wonder whether this is really Venice, the enchanted isle, which had turned a second into an hour, and invented a new way for the mind to be

happy ; which flung over the old world the graceful light of its illusions, the mirage of its beauty. Where are the figures of pleasure with their drapery of brocade, the dresses made of light with wavering gleams of gold, the sportive beauties framed in ornate arches ? We find no long-necked guitars scattering serenades, no rosewood harpsichord accompanying the minuet, nor boat bound for Cythera on the moon's path over the sea, no golden oars and paper lanterns ; but a calm probity, a golden mean in morals, a very straightforward common sense, and a charming wisdom, cheerful and easy-going, with a dash of sermonising and a grain of satire.

Look closely at those women, masked, or at their toilet, whom Pietro Longhi loved to paint, and you will find that, spite of their pretensions, with their baskets of fruit, their plain little tables, their maids and their children, they are most often like good quiet housewives playing at being great ladies. Consider the few *grands seigneurs* whom Goldoni introduces. They are without literature or manners, void of style, with no feeling for beauty, and with the airs and graces of a beadle. They labour to appear correct, and make pretension to fashion. In them Goldoni is portraying a society with which he is unacquainted. He speaks of them as though of foreigners.

Here as elsewhere, it is the family we are shown, not the world of society ; the parlour, not the reception-room. And here as elsewhere, in all the testimony of clerical latinists, verse-writing tutors, and authors of lampoons, grandeur is lacking. One can see it by merely comparing the decent integrity that pervades them with the flaming imaginations of a Tiepolo. It was in vain that the ancient aristocracy of Venice, now in its death-struggles, died with such grace ; all the poetry and elegance and luxury of that lofty society and that magnificent time, wit refining the senses and vice clothing itself in courtesy, are in general absent from contemporary

Venetian art, produced as it is by bourgeois and expressive of their mind.

Pantaloön is no longer the merry-andrew of the Old Comedy. He has suddenly risen from his skinflint degradation, and grown both in dignity and in importance. With Carlo Gozzi he becomes the charming old man, soft-hearted as a little child ; in Goldoni's drama, he takes his place as Truth. No longer do the others bait him and mock at him ; now it is he who draws the rest in his train—holding all the threads of the plot, uttering the right word at every juncture, and giving voice to the moral of the play. So far from blushing that he is a bourgeois and a tradesman, he is proud of it. He has the tranquil assurance of the man who is sufficient to himself and deserves his place in the sunlight. "Commerce," he declares, "is useful to society, necessary to the life of peoples, and, when a man practises it honourably as I do, he ought not to be called plebeian." Entering into his part, he despises gilded insolence and unprofitable cumberers of the ground ; and goes on, "Plebeian is the man who, just because he has inherited a title and a bit of land, consumes his life in idleness, and thinks he has a right to trample on the rest of the world as a matter of privilege." And so firm is this Venetian in his convictions, that he has even no prejudice in favour of the nobility, respecting it only so far as it lives up to its claims, and looking at its deeds, not its coat-of-arms. "You have become a Countess," he says to Doralice, "but the title is not enough to gain respect for one who has not won people's affection. . . . Be humble, and patient, and kind, and then you will be noble !" Obliging, but in nowise fond of having his kindness imposed upon ; wearing no sword, but owning a tongue and knowing how to use it ; liking women, but never duped for long by their smirks and smiles ; a friend to order, quietness, and nourishing food ; not given to nerves or convulsions ; placid and smiling, good-



tempered and good-natured ; eager to do right, though a thousand leagues' distance from the heroism of an earlier age—this good fellow, contented and well-to-do, is the crown of Goldoni's drama, giving expression to all his wisdom and voicing his well-considered views of life. He stands for a new condition of things and a new state of mind—the commonalty of Venice.

For the rest, they leave politics alone. Politics are a sacred precinct, reserved for princes and knights, wearers of the stole, who walk about on the Broglio, and step into the Council without exertion. Let those whose concern it is deal with these high matters ; far be it from us to touch them ! Shall we dare to express an opinion, or even to have one ? Not likely ! Are we the men to give advice to these wise and great, or claim to interfere with their *correzioni* and their *parti* ? Scarcely that ! It would be to court a visit from Messer Grande ; and then—we know pretty well what is the dread Tribunal's justice ; once under the Leads, good-bye to you ; no knowing when you'll get out.

Not that they understand nothing of what is going on. They read the *Post-Boys* and the *Couriers* ; whence worthy Agapito learns that the wedding of the King's daughter of Mongolia with the Hereditary Prince of China has lately been celebrated. "What ho !" he cries, "they haven't been long about it ; I wager I am the first person in Italy to hear of it." And, ascertaining that China has sent an embassy to the Grand Khan of Tartary, but that it is anticipated that the Tartar will refuse to give audience, "What's this ?" says he ; "he won't give audience ? Why not ? What for ?" Such questions they discuss among themselves, displaying such familiarity with them as men should, especially in presence of the silly women. But, on all besides, mum's the word. They leave politics alone.

They leave religion alone likewise—in fact, whatever

subjects are taboo in Venice. Religion is a sublime mystery, no fit matter for our human weakness to endeavour to explain ; accordingly, we find them uncovering at the Ave Maria, following processions taper in hand, and attending vespers on Sunday at, for instance, the Church of S. Angelo, where a catechism is held, with a sacred dialogue, exposition of the Holy Sacrament, and much devout prayer. Freethought has no more attraction for them than has Jacobinism. They have no idea of overthrowing anything whatever ; what has always been must still be ; no change to be made in it ; folk who want to change things are dangerous ; low fellows. No more firm supports than they of recognised doctrine, established order, solemn and venerable Law.

Clothed in wool and not in silk, favourers of sugar-loaf hats and *paletta* shoes, who have never made any alteration in the cut of their clothes, the setting of their trinkets, the hours of their meals, or the articles of their faith, they are Conservatives in the extreme. They live in the old fashion ; devoted, like Carlo Gozzi, to old things, and what they call " the old style "—those " ancient smoke-begrimed laws " of the sovereign Republic, to which To-day is a traitor. They are loyal servants of the past, preserving tradition as they preserve the domestic hearth.

They protest against the new, in every way, and first by the reactionary example of their life. While others break out in dissipation, they retire within themselves ; while others spend, they hoard ; while others find life tedious, they are working and earning sequins, and have no time to be bored. Nobles may descend to the most shameless licence, turn day into night, eat at improper times, receive actresses in their drawing-room, or, like the patrician Andrea Querini, allow their daughters to address them with familiarity and call them *mio caro ochio e ochieto* ; such conduct is not for them. Is it right behaviour to lay a meal on three tables in three separate

rooms, one for soup, one for roast, and the third for dessert ? Or to daub one's face with so many pomades ? Or to let a man lace one's corset ? Or (save the mark !) to wear a silk chemise ? Or a pair of slippers "costing more than three good mares ?"

Their children are not familiar ; they say Sir to them. Their daughters, when they go to mass, walk with eyes downcast. Their wives gloss their complexion with water from the well, and add not a ribbon to their kerchief without the master's approval. If there is company to dinner, they doff their apron and that is enough. If they own silver plate and old jewellery, it is never used ; their pleasure is in having it, not in showing it. What is the sense of all those little cloaks and capes, and embroidered head-bands, and that enormous arrangement with which ladies bedeck their lower half ? They pretend not to know what it is for, and call it a Mercator's Projection, or an alembic, or a caldron, or a labyrinth, or a boat's cabin, or a sunshade for the feet, or a net for catching quails, or a perambulator. And what is the use of those essences and elixirs and cold-creams, these tea-gowns and *bombe* and *fianchetti* and painted faces ? "*Gran Parigi !*" exclaim the silly jades as they go a-shopping, in dresses "worth a whole barnful of wheat." They have no use for the sayings or the manners or the cooking of "great Paris" ; their patriotism extends even to the breakfast-table.

It is all in vain that so much has come to pass that "nothing seems out of fashion nowadays ;" in their seclusion, all the changes seem dull and void. Their discipline has remained unalterable, as it was three centuries ago. Pantaloon may display the most gracious temper ; let but a *cicisbeo* prowl round his wife, and he will threaten him with the *oubliette*. Pantaloon may be fond of the sex, and you may find him, indeed, peeling a pear between two of them who make eyes at him ; but, when they deserve it, he beats them as religiously and

punctually as a contemporary of Sacchetti. And Bettina, in the *Buona Moglie* of Goldoni, Bettina who is an expression of their ideal of married virtue, Bettina who is silent when her husband thrashes her lest the neighbours should know of it, who weeps quietly by the hearth her faithless master has deserted, who defends him, absent, against all and every reproach, who drives from her heart the suggestions of resentment, and from her threshold the advances of the procuress, who will allow to herself and to others no word of complaint, of doubt, or of condemnation—this Bettina is own sister to Boccaccio's Griselda, like her a slave fettered to the caprice of her lord and all-powerful tyrant.

You little women, who trot about with a patch on your cheek and a grain of whim in your mind, you need not smile at these sequestered lives. Though they are as much deserted by the stream of the world as an old dilapidated boat in the corner of a *campiello*, yet some peculiar virtues lie hid in that obscurity. And in Goldoni's four *Rusteghi*, rigid, laconic, and surly as they are, made up of grievances, bent on doing their duty, sullenly tenacious of the right, there survives something of the mighty soul of dead Venice.

But these qualities are melting from day to day beneath the enervating breath of the sea air. True, old Pantaloon, fast-bound by custom, still works in his shop; but his children would blush to show their faces there, and they make ducks and drakes on the Canal with the ducats he accumulates. His son leaves cloth-yard and scales for cards and frivolity, his daughter tries her hand at playing the *zentildonna*, and has chosen a *cicisbeo*. Venice is not more full of threadbare and insolvent nobles, than of parvenus and small bourgeois striving to rise in society and ruining themselves in masquerades and rustic holidays. After all, one must do as one's neighbour is doing, or one's cousin, or one's friend; one must do the

same as others. "They bring discredit on themselves," protests Pantaloon, "simply in order to do as others do. . . . To what end these jewels, which cost a king's ransom, and lock up capital in barrenness which might produce more wealth? That they may do as others do. To what end do they throw their affairs into confusion? To do as others do. To what end do they go bankrupt? To do as others do. Yes, so as to do as others do, they do evil! . . ."

They are not the people to leave off their flannel vests at the first hint of spring. They regret the old-fashioned *Sensà* and its three fine streets full of all the best commodities. Still, when they notice a monkey's grimaces in front of a booth, they can't help smiling. . . .

No, it is not from these good folk that salvation will spring for the threatened commonwealth. Nor from the people either.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE PEOPLE

THE people play the same part in contemporary Venetian society as in an old-fashioned comedy—confidential servant, waiting-maid, lackey, porter, or boatman ; nothing besides. Yet they are vastly numerous ; filling harbour, jetty, isles, and sea. They are in the wineshop drinking, in the workshop working, in the *campiello* dancing the *furlana*, in the darkness singing, and enthroned on the prow of gondolas ; on their feet when the others are seated ; up and at work, when the others are stretched on cushions in graceful poses. Vast numbers of them ; rope-makers, shipwrights, men of the Arsenal and men of the booth, men who build boats and men who sail them, the catchers of fish and the sellers. Then there are the weavers and pressers of silk ; there are the glass-blowers and the rest. There are the old women in the doorway discussing chances for the regatta or a throw at Lotto ; threaders of pearls and makers of casts ; and vendors of rosebuds, lettuce, and broccoli. There are the girls in print dresses pictured at the corner of a group by Pietro Longhi, who look forward to the next consecration three months ahead. And there is the boy walking the Riva without clothes ; throw a halfpenny into the green water, and he dives and comes up holding it between his teeth, with a laughing face and hair over his eyes.

The people are very courteous, charmingly gentle, full of most polite irony, ready and gracious. If a foreigner ask the road, they at once amend their accent, leave their work, and see him on his way. If they are permitted

to look on at the splendid Shrove-Thursday dinner in the gilded Hall, they will retire without a murmur the moment an usher shakes a bunch of keys. If the Piazza is turned into an arena, and a most splendid bull-fight is given in honour of the "Count and Countess of the North," not a guard or a musket keeps back at the gate the excited crowd with all its passionate curiosity. None are needed. The boxes at the theatre spit on to the people below.

They are a people of artists, with a relish for the beauty they unfold with their coarse hands. On the lace-maker's distaff come into being those white and flexible creations, made of a dream or a ray, woven in hoar-frost or foam, with such delicate threads as the Virgin spins from bough to bough on dewy mornings. At the tip of the glass-blower's rod the fused glass trembles and stirs, begins to swell like a woman's breast, opens out like a corolla, and expands into a diapered flower-cup, a rainbow-tinted calyx, frail visions, pure shapes and hues, treasuring all the light of sky and sea. On the folding looms of the master-weavers, the flame-coloured or snow-white silk takes a flower-pattern of silver or gold, becomes a rich and costly stuff, and illuminates itself with living splendour, making the poor walls of the workshop look dull and faded. It is the common people who make the cloth of gold, and the wonderful glass, and the beautiful rose-point lace. A people of artists.

And a people of poets. The milliner Lucietta, in her smiling beauty at the window on the *campiello*, lets down a little basket to Zorzetto with a flower in it. "Lovely flower!" cries the sixteen-year-old boy, and then: "It is like the giver." This is nothing, and yet everything—a smiling grace in the spirit of the people, like the young figure of Lucietta at the window. However poor we may be, we can all nurse this spark of poetry in our life, as they do.

They have such charming proverbs: "*La filia che va a l'altar co la so innocenza—fin i alberi ghe fa la riverenza*;"

such sweet lovers' names : "*Cara tata, cara raise, visserve mie!*" and such delicious diminutives. Their dialect is full of caresses, their speech decked with imagery. And when a pretty baby has done something wrong, and laughs with a finger pressing in each cheek, they say : "*Oramai ve conosso, sior santoccio!*" At the church-door, when they take holy water, they say :—

*"Aqua santa che me bagna;  
Spirito santo che me compagna;  
Bruta bestia, va via de mi. . ."*

And when they clasp their hands for the Lord's Prayer, they say :—

*"Pater noster pichenin,  
Su l'altar de l'oselin;  
L'oselin el giera verto  
E San Piero giera scoverto. . ."*

It is from their ranks that there come all the impromptu composers, such as Antonio Bianchi, who writes epic poetry and is just a gondolier ; or Zuane Sibiliato, who is bidden by the Condulmer to improvise before the Princess of Lorraine, and is simple master of a boat in the wine-traffic. They know whole cantos of Tasso by heart ; and strings of miracles in verse, which they repeat in the home-circle. They are the story-teller's best customers, listening open-mouthed on the Mole, where the enchanted tale unfolds, with its adventures, duels, transformations, sirens, winged horses, and dragons ; listening with eyes lowered, sitting on the ground with children between their sprawling legs. And when the narrator suddenly breaks off his story at the most thrilling point and goes round, hat in hand, they find an old halfpenny, somewhere down in their pocket, to throw in ; find a halfpenny, in the midst of their obscure existence, all labour and privation, to spend on beauty without utility. And under a broken-down wall their

little daughters, no taller than a top-boot, are playing at sedan-chairs, while it is they who sing :—

*“ La madona in caregheta,  
La madona in caregon,  
La polenta sul balcon. . . . ”*

An old woman, in a quiet courtyard, singing one of those far-away songs which once sounded on her path like a lover's greeting ; with her eyes shut, rocking her head to and fro, she is singing softly :—

*“ Go visto una colomba el cielo andare  
Che la svolava su per un giardino ;  
In mezzo 'l peto la gavea do ale  
E in boca la tegniva un zenzamino,  
Vustu saver l'amor del zenzamino :  
L'odor xe grando, e'l fior l'è picenino ! ”*

Or perhaps :—

*“ El mio moroso xe dal Bassanello,  
Elo xe mato, e mi no go cervelo,  
Elo da mato me vol menar via ;  
E mi, da baroncela, ghe andaria. ”*

A woman accompanies on the tambourine ; the girls dance to it, looking bright in the middle of the gay courtyard—a “ flower,” or a *pasta da marzapan*, or a *pometo di riosa*, they are called ; and they have pinned a rose in their hair to show every one that they are promised in marriage.

*Villottes* for dancing, breathless serenades, boat-tunes on the lighted barge, slow melodies, chants in a minor key, and little snatches of fugitive and laughing song !—who was it made up this melodious wealth of rhyme and rhythm ? No one can say. Sometimes it rises out of the depths of the past, as sea-wrack comes to the surface ; sometimes it bears the whim of the day on its lucent wings. At any rate, it belongs to the people, for it is they who make use of it. While the exquisites touch

harpsichord or organ in learned modulations, it is the people who sing, who clothe the passing hour in a garment of music, who make every sound a voice in Venice. They sing at their work, in their rest, at their pleasures; they sing on the warm pavement where they have sunk to rest; and they sing in the night with its crowd of stars bright with love. It is they who make night itself vocal.

They are robust, upright, rooted in the past; still believing in indomitable strength; familiar with the movements of throwing a line and casting anchor; living face to face with the element, in strife and in communion with it; exhaling an honest breath of sweat and brine. In their strength, with its vigorous atmosphere, there survives something of the heroism of those old island-dwellers who, without soil or rock or wood, built upon mud the triumphal city.

The bells they care for are the Marangona which heralds the working day, and the Realtina which denotes its end. Their games are games in which the biceps takes part; their entertainments are feats of muscles in action—Labours of Hercules, Bull-Fights, Regattas out in the windy open, with a banner for the prize. Their dance is no graceful minuet, but the rough country *furlana*. Their cry is still the old patriotic cry which struck terror into the world: "San Marco!" In their boats running to meet the billows, the tawny or red or black sails, flapping against the mast and tapering into the sky, still show the Lion and the Book like an ancient standard. Others may deck themselves with gewgaws and trinkets; the golden thread over the fisherman's ear and round the maiden's neck is like a shred of the golden robe that once covered Venice. Others, on afternoons in Carnival, may fill the lagoons with glitter and prattle; the people at sunrise fill it with vegetables and hay; the heavy barges, laden with bunches and clusters of fruit, appear and disappear in a moment like a pomp of rural plenty. With others, made tame and bloodless



by a life of ease, all passion is still ; in the people it is still fiery, accumulating its force, muttering and rumbling, coming to the surface for a trifle, shooting out a flame of insult, with the lightning-flash of a knife or a burst of fury. " My bite is poisonous with the rage of love," says one of their songs. Beneath the semblance of a shrewd indolence and a mild irony, the national spirit holds its own, all the stronger for its concealment ; purpose as straight as a bowsprit, heart as frank as a love-motto on a tattooed arm.

The people's daughter, perhaps their type, is the golden-haired Bettina drawn by Goldoni ; strong and haughty, and as vigorous as a masculine Venus in a painting of Veronese. It is in vain that fashionable vice lurks about her humble abode ; her contempt crushes it ; she is sturdy in resistance to man, capable of shouldering out of the house the musk-scented spark with his trimmings and embroideries ; knowing life, and not blushing to own to her knowledge ; with a downright love for her Pasqualino, for whom she saves her bloom, preferring bread and garlic with him to fatted fowls with another. " All right, under the stairs will do—but it must be with my Pasqualino." And when Pasqualino has slipped the wedding-ring on her finger, the shy bride will not leave her hand in his, not in terror of him but in fear of herself. She is a thing of nature, a wild creature, a large and splendid woman of the people, grown up in the free air of street and sea, head and shoulders above the artificial, superficial society around her. She is the child and the favourite of the shrewd and trusty gondoliers, with their reserves and their jealousies, who do servants' work " but keep their hands clean " ; having credit in the shops ; well known for their witty speeches ; maintaining a family with their earnings, in a home decked with portraits of old people and trophies of regattas, where if not elsewhere they claim to be masters. " Polenta for me, but in my own house ! " " The red

cap, by all means, but leave the forehead open!"—players of *morra*, with ready hands and bold tongues; calling each other "gossip"; speaking of a penny as "a newspaper"; crowding to the play; abominating the *sbirri*, "who go about everywhere searching for trouble, like doctors"; and with a passionate devotion to their country: "We love her with all our faculties; would shed our blood for her; would fight no matter whom, if we heard her ill spoken of, who is Queen of the Sea."

They show an admirable reserve of strength, a store of fresh and youthful vigour unimpaired by any events; what may be called the richest of all a society's hoards; whence resistance would spring, if the people existed. But they do not. Not only do they not count, they simply do not exist; they are not born into public life; they have never realised their rights. At the theatre you can spit on them from the boxes as you spit on the ground. They have no thought of complaint, no thought of anything; they are happy. "Perhaps there are no people," said the German Maier, "more content with their destiny, more devoted to their masters, more fully convinced of the wisdom of their government, or more infatuated with their country." "They seem like a single family," added the Russian Grand Dukes; a family of which, according to Goethe, the grandfather is the Doge.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE END OF VENICE

AND the end is come. A glory of roseate light, a supreme enchantment, a moment that seems like forgetfulness—and then the end. Venice is in her agony; she has fulfilled her destiny; she is living her last hour. This mighty creation, this great and splendid being, is on the point of death.

For three centuries she has been stricken. Ever since the discovery of America, and the way round the Cape of Good Hope, she has seen her empire decrease and her star grow pale. As early as 1468 she lost Negropont; in 1570, Cyprus; in 1669, Candia. The Eighteenth Century robs her of her last possessions—in 1715 her small remainder of Crete; in 1718, Morea. One by one the best harbours of the Albanian and Dalmatian coast drop away. She submits to the shameful Peace of Passarowitz. The institution of the free port of Ancona and the fair of Sinigaglia have dealt a direct blow at her trade. By her side, and opposite to her, Trieste rises on the Adriatic; in the Mediterranean, Genoa and Leghorn flaunt a prosperity which wounds her like an insult. The Austrian and the Bourbon have defrauded her of her prestige in Italy; England and Holland have snatched her sea-supremacy; her navy was interred in the grave of Angelo Emo. Anxious only, in the great struggles, to keep her finger gracefully out of the pie, she no longer takes a side in the critical events around her—the Russo-Turkish war, and the war of Austrian Succession, and the terrible adventure of the Revolution. Full of attention and politeness for all the powers, she stands neither as

ally nor as foe to any of them. A slave to the neutrality which "can neither beget friendship nor resist enmity," she holds off. She is on the fringe of existence, a survival, an innocuous and aged being of whom Europe speaks as of an escheated territory, sending her the first comer as ambassador, allowing her to subsist for the very reason that she is so weak. Once the Lion of S. Mark covered the world with his spreading wings; to-day he is nothing more than the domesticated beast displayed at the Carnival of 1762 in a *casotto* on the Piazza; a poor gentle creature with his hair turned white, worried by Maltese dogs and led about into parlours. This splendid light is not the dazzling brilliance of dawn, but the last fire of the sunset. And beneath the radiant show, the moment you look, and wherever you look, the decay is seen.

Grace and merriment, and dreamland with its delicate tissue of illusions—gazing at the gondola, with the little star on its prow, in a moonlit expanse—listening to the arpeggio of water-drops as they drip from the glistening oars—yes, all things wane and fail together, all things sink into ruin and crumble away. The springs of life ebb from the great outworn heart of Venice. The dullest of travellers can see that the downfall is imminent.

Already poverty has come; you can see it peeping through the holes in the purple cloak with its gold flowering. A few palaces restored, a few churches opened—but how many cracking house-fronts and gaping walls and windows boarded-up; how many glories peeling and scaling off in fragments! A few frescoes commissioned, a few collections and galleries filled; but how many regal halls emptied of their treasures! Remains of antiquity, clear marbles, precious implements, brilliant statues, paintings by Veronese "with thirty-six figures"—all these are for sale; open the contemporary news-sheets, and you find them as full of things for sale as a second-hand dealer's; so much so that Gorgi compared the

Republic to "an old woman selling off her furniture." A few patricians may still maintain their rank, but the great number of them have lost all shame and all memory of their position ; occupying a particular quarter of Venice—even forming a class, the Barnabotti, among whom, along with some instances of self-respect in poverty, there are far more deplorable cases of humiliation ; threadbare cloaks, discoloured lace ; poor devils in desperate straits ; cringing parasites, and all those shabby gray lives that feed on shifts and crumbs under the table—a Carati darning his black socks with a bit of green silk ; a Zane hiring a wretched truckle-bed every evening to spend the night on ; a Soranzo, " naked and wretched," the buffoon of the lowest street-corners—you see them begging about the inn-yard, knocking at house-doors, stealing a small fish in the market and hiding it up their sleeves ; on the stage, they provide Goldoni with a fresh type, the *scaduto*, as common and as grotesque a figure as that of the bourgeois with social ambitions. " Oh ! " cried Bettina, " how many Illustrissimi in these days one sees carrying a quart of yellow flour in a handkerchief ! " Where are the thousand millionaire nobles enumerated by the Doge Tommaso Mocenigo in his complacent will of the year 1434 ? Where is the bustle of the workshops turning out wealth, the forge of the Arsenal hammering out power ? Nails driven home, boiling pitch, keels caulked, the stir of a people around ships on the stocks—this is what Dante had seen ; the ancient smithy of Venice smoking and flaring like a cave of Titans—and the image shone in his memory like one of the chasms of the Inferno. To-day Montesquieu and other visitors find scarcely four or five hundred labourers, working " as though for amusement." The pewterers shut up shop ; the turners cry out for the reduction of the crushing imposts ; the weavers cannot pay interest on the loans which they must raise to keep alive ; the stone-cutters have fallen into indigence. Venice has now only 700



pieces of woollen to show, for the 28,000 she produced annually in the sixteenth century. And luxury grows proportionately with the increase of distress. The poorer the ancient city grows, the more extravagant she becomes, as though she had lost all idea of the value of money since she ceased to earn it. On the threshold of the century, at the election of the Doge Ruzzini, the festivities cost 34,473 Venetian lire ; in 1789, at the election of the last Doge, Lodovico Manin, they cost 189,192. The factories may be deserted ; but the hundred and thirty-six casini for assemblies, and the five thousand families which at the fall of the Republic receive company every evening, see their drawing-rooms crowded. Industry may stand still ; but the School of Perruquiers, that sanctified national institution, can show in 1797 eight hundred and fifty-two adherents. And, according to Ange Goudar, " of all the great undertakings with which the State was once busy, nothing is left but the hazard-table."

The too long and lasting peace has done its work. It is not well that man should fear no other danger but those four P.'s—Pantalone, Prete, Pietra Bianca, and one other—against which a local proverb warned the foreign visitor to Venice ; the integrity of the human mind is tainted by this rule of life. Of old, when the tocsin called, a whole host rushed to arms ; what should one do for arms to-day ? Such as people have are displayed as museum-rarities—" a war-panoply for show," " a mediæval suit of armour," old halberds, old swords, guns and muskets with ill-fitted locks, a bundle of old iron past work, not fit even to equip " a Prussian regiment," according to the German captain Archenholtz. Of old, the ever-present struggle kept the finest energies alive ; alarms besieged men's hearts like the sea bursting on the dykes, and carved them into shape for high exploits ; fronting the foe, the cannon of the galleys roared in chorus, and this thunder made the joyous salute of an elated people. To-day, if an arquebuse

chances to go off on the Piazza, there is a general scare and a rush for safety ; if Casanova mischievously slips the forecast of an earthquake for May 25th, 1783, into the newsletter of the Venetian ambassador at Vienna, panic reigns supreme, and patricians stream out of the city towards their country-houses. Of old, the heroic years, each boasting of some feat of arms, bore the name of a war, a battle, or a victory ; to-day they take the name of a singer, and men speak of the Todi's year as once they spoke of the year of Lepanto.

The spirit of the people no longer gives birth to those valiant and magnanimous souls, in whom the consciousness of a whole race once stood up, stirred by the elemental feeling of a nation, inspired only by God and S. Mark. The patricians seem to have lost the pride of privilege and dignity with the pride of their robes—hats rimmed with silk, scarlet cloaks, white pigtails, or the little bardachin wig of the old Doge Pisani ; they dress like everybody else, and go about with any one ; at the door of the Council, where they must wear the livery of their rank, a gondola awaits them with a box of clothes, so that at their coming out they may more readily be quit of their cumbrous magnificence ; sometimes they do not even wait till they get into the street, and Count Pepoli appears on the threshold, after a sitting, with one arm already slipped into the sleeve of his Harlequin's costume. The noble ambition of service ; the intense devotion to the public weal which is the weal of everybody ; the irrepressible longing to bestow on the common motherland all the heart's love and all the mind's energy ; pride felt only in her greatness, reward looked for only in increase with her ; no shuffling over it, but immediate consent, and the sacrifice of everything, of pleasure, leisure, even of the favourite grievance—all these are forgotten customs. Public charges are burdens, honours are a drudgery. To the winds with these dull employments that fetter the mind and tear it away from the

sweets of doing nothing ! Men vie with each other in shaking off such trammels, " so that the most considerable, most ancient and principal dignities of the Republic are refused, and left in the meanest abasement." No more ambition in Venice to be a citizen, a knight, or a senator ; no more ambition even to be Doge. On receiving the news of his choice for the supreme office of his country, Lodovico Manin, the last Doge of Venice, bursts into sobs, swoons away, cannot eat, and makes such a woeful appearance that he has to be carried off to his room and put to bed. " I felt," he confesses, " such anguish at the election that I scarcely knew what I was about ! " It is in vain that events hurry towards their end, and there is every need of foresight, attention, and the taking of steps for the public safety ; in the Ducal Palace the Hall of Debate is deserted ; they are in the country, around their mistresses, absorbed in their trivial amusements ; Venice is in her last throes—nothing can impair their charming indolence ; the death of Venice is at issue—they smile as they pluck one of the flowers that cluster on the greensward. In old days, no decision of the Grand Council was valid without 1200 voices ; in 1785, only 800 are required ; later, 600 ; on the 12th of May 1797, at the sitting which signs the abdication of the Republic, there are only 537 voters. Civic patriotism is no more than a rusted trophy at the Arsenal ; pride is no more than a grandee's wig left to the moth in an attic ; the spider weaves its web of oblivion over mighty memories. Noble rank itself, of which this oligarchy of aristocrats was once so jealous, surrounding it with so many obstacles and protecting it against so many chances—the very soul of the State, driven into its foundations like the ashen piles, and gracing its summit like a pearl on the Doge's cap—is now for sale. " Nobility sells for 100,000 ducats," writes Montesquieu. " The Golden Book has become *un livre d'argent*," writes Ange Goudar. And, what is still more sad, there is no

more market for it. On March the 19th, 1775, it is decided to admit to patrician rank forty families possessing an income of 10,000 ducats ; but there are not ten such to come forward.

Beneath the brilliance and charm of the surface, the corruption is deep-set. An invisible gangrene is surely doing its task. Mingling with the scent of essences there rises the stench of an organism already found by the worms.

Things must, after all, be called by their names. We must give a name to the debauchery, the vice, and the degradation. "The *zentildonne* have turned themselves into courtesans" ; and patricians draw their incomes not only from the theatres of which they have become managers, or the gaming-houses of which they have become croupiers, but from other and more shameful sources besides ; and that with such effrontery that on Sept. 15th, 1796, the State is obliged to intervene "to dam the flow of this traffic." We may linger over the wit and the talent of Casanova ; but look at him from the point of view of morality, and he is a foul creature. And yet the moral law exists, and is the most sacred of laws for mankind ; a mysterious inner harmony, never eluded or violated with impunity. In Venice, considered in the light of morality, the cesspool can be seen.

On the surface of the ancient organism, a thousand years old, dissolution is spreading in blotches. It reaches almost every point, not only to the great folk, where it is of course ; but those also who should set the good example, the magistrates in office, the regular ambassadors, the renowned dignitaries—a Dolfin, Ambassador of the Republic at the courts of Paris and Vienna, delighting in the unsavoury newsletter of Ballarini, his agent in Venice ; a Memmo, Ambassador of the Republic to the Holy See, shamelessly retailing the broadest stories even in the presence of the most venerable prelates ; a



Mocenigo, Podesta and Vice-Captain at Verona, Ambassador of the Republic in Spain and France, being imprisoned in the fortress at Brescia for his infamous practices. The reigning contagion, like a leprosy, seizes even the ambassadors of foreign Powers, as if it were impossible to breathe the air of this climate without immediate moral corruption. M. de Froullay seduces the patrician Maria da Riva in her convent ; M. de Montaignu "is wholly taken up with revelry, gaming, licence, and so forth ;" and we know the nature of the exploits which Casanova attributes to Abbé de Bernis in Venice. In 1791, according to the private information received by the secretary of the Neapolitan Resident at the café of the spy Benincasa, the Nuncio is cloaking secret indulgence behind open attentions to the Countess Cattaneo ; the connection of the French Ambassador with Mrs. Seymour, of the Russian Minister with a Milanese lady, and of the English resident with an actress, are all well-established. Venice, indeed, has become a veritable Aretino's court—the papers of the Inquisitor abounding in cautions and condemnations of nobles, "sometimes for youthful excesses, sometimes for scandalous intercourse, sometimes for offences against the marriage-bond, sometimes for wild dissipation, sometimes because public morals are damaged, sometimes because patrician dignity is wounded." Montesquieu had tasted these pleasures ; unlike Messalina, he declared himself sated without being weary.

We must be fair. No doubt such morals were common all over Europe in the eighteenth century ; and neither the Paris of the Regency, nor the England of Hamilton, nor the courts of the great Frederick and the great Catherine, nor even of the prude Maria Theresa, nor idyllic Switzerland, nor Calvinist Geneva, could escape censure in this matter ; the *Memoirs* of Casanova show that with a painful clearness. The singularity of Venice consists in the indulgence shown to vice, the absence of



scandal and hypocrisy, and the extraordinary frankness revealed ; the world of people and things smile upon it, as though the capacity for indignation were lost, and the power to blush obsolete.

People are no more surprised "to see a patrician enter the gondola with his concubine than to see him take off his mask in the antechamber of the Council." When these persons cross the Piazza, leaning on the arm of nobles, "everybody bows to them as though they were ladies of high position." The preacher who comes to deliver a Lenten sermon brings his mistress with him, "well-dressed and extremely pretty." At a public show, a priest in his cassock at the window exchanges raillery with a woman of notorious reputation, "who taps him on the nose with her fan." At the moment of *Président de Brosses*' arrival, there is a furious cabal of three Venetian convents disputing which shall provide the new Nuncio with a mistress. Poor people commonly dispose of their daughters at an early age ; the business is settled in the presence of a notary, by a regular contract valid in the courts, with every item carefully set out—quality of goods, date of delivery, amount of total payment—"the price being generally from 100 to 200 sequins," we are told by the German Maier. Jean-Jacques and his friend Carrio visit a girl sold them by her mother. "My emotions were stirred when I saw this child," writes Rousseau ; "she was fair, and as gentle as a lamb ; you would never have believed that she was Italian." It is nothing to stake one's clothes at the card-table and have to go home naked, as happened to the noble Abbé Niccoló Grioni in 1762 ; a man sometimes stakes his wife. What matter that here, as everywhere, obscene writings are sold round the corner ? The significant thing is their popularity—"knights, sages, and ladies" straying about to get hold of them—and their being frankly signed, often with the greatest names. Giorgio Baffo is a peaceable Senator of the Republic, a man of few words, honourable,

and honoured, blushing like a girl at indecent talk. In 1789, only twenty years after his death, there comes out the complete edition of his verses. You open the four octavo volumes, published under his name, illustrated by his portrait, adorned with his arms—never was so much talent put at the service of so much filth.

All restraints seem done away, all bonds relaxed, all moral fibre unstrung. Here liberty is not, as it has been superbly defined, the power to do what you ought. In this "disorderly house managed by a police-officer," where "you come to do and say whatever you will," where "you live in company with vice from morn till eve," liberty is the power to do what you please, everything you please—Tasso's *quod placet omne licet*—unruliness, misconduct, licence—and the claim to serve no master but your caprice or your appetite. "Visiting women of the town in broad daylight, marrying them, being able to neglect the Easter Sacrament, being entirely unknown and independent in your actions—that is the liberty you have at Venice," wrote Montesquieu. And he added: "But we need to be constrained; man is like a spring, which acts better the more you bend it."

The mind is swollen and already decomposing; the moral being has melted into an unhealthy pulp. The old and worm-eaten building only holds up by a miracle of equilibrium. The ancient decaying State, stricken with decrepitude and doddering old age, "is succumbing to the assault of Time," says Goethe, "like everything which attains existence." "*La xe vechia, la xe vechia sta buzzarona!*" cried Andrea Tron, called at Venice "the Patron." She is so old that she has fallen into her second childhood; as old as "the child of threescore and ten"—Tartaglia's name for Pantaloon. She is at her last gasp, at the mercy of the slightest touch; and every one knows it.

For, what is perhaps even sadder than all this unconsciousness of morality is the shrewdness of intellect, still

remarkably clear-sighted, the plain anticipation of disaster. "This age," cried the Doge Foscarini, "will be terrible to our sons and our great-nephews." And Flangini adds: "O sons, beloved sons, for us who are old there may be a remnant of the Republic still left; but for you children it is quite finished." Yes, these far-seeing and feeble old men appear as plainly forewarned, as clearly apprised of the danger, as they are evidently impotent to avert the storm. On May 22, 1779, Giuseppe Gradenigo, Secretary to the Inquisitors, writes to his brother in France: "On the first appearance of any ship full of foreign troops, we shall lose our possessions not only in a campaign but in a moment." "We have," cries Paolo Renier at the sitting of the Grand Council on April 30th, 1780, "neither land-forces, nor sea-forces, nor allies; we live at a venture, thanks to favourable destiny, and to the high opinion that is held of the prudence of our Government." "Your Excellencies," reports Erizzo, under date Oct. 30, 1784, "have no capable and efficient officers; and if ever an occasion should arise to despatch them to some distant country, do not blame my audacity if I dare frankly to affirm that they would be in a very bad way." "All goes ill," adds another Senator; "there is no trade, no money, no soldiers, no officers, or what there are can be regarded as only for show; how could the Senate make war?" And, according to the last Doge, things have come to a point when "neither the ills nor their remedies can be endured." Alas! how can a check be put to the long process of internal breaking-up? What shock can galvanise this corpse into life? What salt can arrest this putrefaction? What rock will serve as fulcrum for the leverage to raise this mass? The people? The people do not count. The bourgeois? They have no word in the matter. The healthy parts that survive in the ancient patrician order? The best of them, like the great Doge Marco Foscarini, see no anchor of hope but

the example of the past. And so, in splendid harangues delivered in the *bigoncia*, mighty memories are called up ; or the importation of goods with foreign marks is prohibited ; or cafés are ordered to close at two in the morning. And the revelry goes on ; and the carnival grows more extravagant ; and folly scorns all bounds. . . .

And then comes Bonaparte.

The little Corsican, sudden in his resolves like a thunderbolt—lean, imperious, silent ; with long flat locks of hair over his ears, his coat crossed by the general's scarf ; twenty-eight years old.

This man knows nothing of the graces of life. He has never tasted the charm of existence that smiles from the old world. He has grown up amid poverty, silence, and toil, far from others ; feeding with ambition one of the most formidable spirits that ever came into the world, gathering every force around his will, storing all lightning within call of his thought.

Here he comes ; with an army of tatters and flintlocks, ill-furnished, ill-paid, without shoes, without money, without brandy, without bread ; for officers, a crew of rough veterans like Augereau, of blades like Lannes, of braggarts like Murat, of ex-pirates and corsairs like Masséna—abruptly he has appeared on the threshold of the ancient smiling Italy, streamed down upon her like a storm, let himself loose upon her like a scourge. He has seen obstacles break down before his cyclonic fury. Before passing into Tyrol, he has been victorious in fourteen pitched battles and seventy engagements, has made more than a hundred thousand prisoners, taken from the enemy five hundred field-pieces, two thousand heavy guns, and four bridge-trains ; has sent thirty millions to the Treasury, and more than three hundred masterpieces of ancient and modern art to the Museum ; the Kings of Sardinia and Naples, the Pope and the Duke of Parma, have intrigued for his friendship ; he has

driven the English from Genoa, from Leghorn, and from Corsica. At Montenotte, at Millesimo, at Mondovi, everywhere the roar of guns has proclaimed his genius. He is writing out his terrible creation in letters of blood. What, then, can he care for the shadow in his path of a Republic whose day is past ; for its old-womanly courtesy unwilling to strike any one even with a flower ? He crosses the frontier without taking thought ; he invades the territory without striking a blow ; he violates the ancient neutrality without a word of apology. " A feeble, mean-spirited people, unfit for liberty, without land and water of its own ; " so he afterwards speaks of it. Such is his contempt that he barter it before he has won it. So little does he care for its rights of a thousand years, that, even before he has entered its imperial capital, he offers it to Austria at the preliminaries of Leoben.

From the first he speaks as master, and he is master—at Peschiera, at Legnago, at Verona ; high of speech, abrupt of gesture, frowning. He must have this, that, and the other ; he must have muskets, cannon, horses, mules, provisions, fodder, everything that he lacks, everything that is demanded by his ragged paladins ; the park of artillery from Legnago for the siege of Mantua ; a hospital with two hundred beds for the wounded at Brescia ; the fortress of Peschiera ; a thousand hundred-weight more of meal, six thousand pints of brandy, two hundred sumpter-mules, sixty draught-horses in addition to the ninety already covenanted for the service of the barges on the Adige ; and all within two days, within twenty-four hours ; if not, he will break off everything. He admits no explanation and no reply. He will not agree to the impossibility of anything ; he denies it. If any timid reference is hazarded to the damage done to the country by his troops, he will not finish reading the Venetian note, but flings the paper on the table, and invites the Provéditeur General to come the same evening and vindicate himself. Venice has betrayed France.



Venice has welcomed Louis XVIII. Venice has allowed Beaulieu to seize Peschiera. He has received the order that night to burn Verona. He is only awaiting an answer from Paris to march on Venice. "Gloomy and morose," Contarini writes of him to the Senate. "Conceiving no bounds to the power of his will," adds Mocenigo; "and, at the breath of opposition, passing in a flash to fury and menace."

Men look distractedly at each other. What is it? Whence comes this new voice? Why this brutal attack? Who is this messenger terrible and great, that for all his greatness seems yet greater than himself, great as error, great as the wrath of God, great as the inevitable drama of life? Has an avenger risen? Is this the beginning of retribution, the sea of blood that is to wash out the stain? They cannot believe it. They break out into protestations of charming politeness; they send this unmannerly commander note upon note, despatch upon despatch. They ply him with pleasant patricians, who ask courteously after his health, and congratulate him on his victories. And, at the same time, driven by fear, they take some extreme steps, such as appointing Foscarini Provveditor General, and making Nani Provveditor of the Lagoons, and associating Condulmer with him as Lieutenant, and recalling the fleet from a cruise—such as levying troops, raising imposts, victualling the estuary, organising civic patrols, and renewing the closing of the harbour to foreign warships. Alas! what is needed is a nation, an army, a faith; and there is none left. There is not even a man; Valaresso, who begs with tears in his eyes not to be made Provveditor; or Foscarini, who accepts only "after tears and wry faces." Besides, what is Foscarini to do, when the supreme commission given him is "to maintain intact the tranquillity of the State, and give ease and happiness to its subjects"? There remains in trembling hands the old blunted weapon of diplomacy—diplomacy against Heaven's thunder.

Bonaparte, who, when he crossed the Mincio, had no immediate object but to pursue Beaulieu to his refuge at Peschiera, very soon saw in the unhappy possessions of the unarmed Republic an excellent windfall. At first, perhaps, he meant no more than to make Venice bear the cost of the heavy war he had on hand. Before long, faced by its easy docility, he thought of extracting four or five millions from it to send to Paris to keep the Directory in humour. Finally it occurred to him to find in it an exchange which might be offered to Austria for the Rhenish provinces so ardently desired by France. From the moment he had appropriated the idea, long in the air, and determined in his swift brain the scheme of the Leoben preliminaries, which preluded the Treaty of Campo Formio, the Republic was lost. From that instant, whatever she might do, her death-sentence was pronounced. In vain she was to show herself from day to day more ready to comply; "the little tiger," as the French Secretary at Rome called him, had sprung at the throat of the old white-maned lion, and the pallid drops of blood followed each other to the ground.

The voice becomes more peremptory, the iron rods more stinging. He is lashing them. He openly flouts these sages, senators, and ambassadors who are sent to him. He speaks of their "club-chatter," their "pack of nonsense," their "diplomatic notes composed by a bad student of rhetoric who has been given a sentence to amplify for an exercise." With a bitter smile, he begs them to induce the Provveditor of Bergamo "to be somewhat less swayed by terror at the sight of the first companies of French soldiers." In presence of the envoys of the Republic, entertained at his table, he allows his staff to indulge in gross pleasantries on the forms of the venerable government, to laugh at the Leads, the Orfano canal, and the oubliettes, and to reproduce audaciously the worst absurdities of French historians. For himself, he is or pretends to be wholly ignorant of the august

constitution of Venice ; talking at random of the Council of *Eight* Hundred, and the *Ten* Inquisitors. Yet they must complain of nothing—not of speculation, or extortion, or violence, or insults which are like spitting in the face. The least lament would call down ruin. Lippomano writes, under date Dec. 10, 1796, “ We have no longer the satisfaction of the wretched and oppressed in being allowed to complain.” And now there is not Bonaparte alone ; there is the Austrian—the armies of Wurmser and Alvinzi who, taking example from the French, invade and hold the land to ransom ; the Algerian, whose bold surprises at sea are multiplied in the distressful situation of the Republic ; and there is Revolution, plainly encouraged and even fomented by the invader, creeping throughout the country, enlisting a whole party of malcontents in the service of the new ideas, and bursting like a ring of mines at Bergamo, at Brescia, at Crema, at Salò. All misfortunes seem to have banded together against the ill-fated State. She makes one single expiation for everything past ; she weeps for all the times she has not wept. Her possessions are the prey of people who lead their convoys through them, roll their guns along, throw up entrenchments, post garrisons, and shout orders in a barbarous tongue. She looks on, harmless and frightened ; she can allow nothing and prevent nothing. Whatever happens, and whatever does not happen, is her fault. If a stray soldier at night falls by a nameless bullet, it is her fault. If an anti-Jacobin movement is organised among the peasants of the Salò valleys, it is her fault. If at Verona the insurrection of the Veronese Easter lifts in a burst of proper national pride a people which has stooped too long and would fain be its own master—it is the fault of the Republic. She is held responsible for these abominable offences ; they are used to tap her on the cheek with a knock-down blow. On April 15, Bonaparte sends his aide-de-camp Junot to Venice ; it is a holiday, the

joyous Holy Saturday, on which by the custom of centuries there is a respite of all political business, and ancient pious rites are charmingly celebrated in the churches—but the College must be assembled on the instant, and the plebeian, booted and spurred, enters with his head high, sits down beside the Doge, occupies the Nuncio's place, and there, aloud, in its own abode, before every one, he accuses the Senate of treachery. On April 20, in spite of strict laws constantly re-enacted which forbid war-vessels to enter the lagoons, Bonaparte allows Captain Laugier to cruise about in front of the Lido, venture under the very guns of the forts, defy signals, flout the warnings given him, and enter the harbour with full sail; and when Laugier falls, struck by a bullet, this crime will serve as the crowning transgression so impatiently looked-for.

On the 25th of April, at Grätz, whither the emissaries of the Republic bring their explanations, the storm bursts, in abrupt sentences, broken words: "I will have no more Inquisitors, no more Senate. . . . I will be an Attila to Venice. . . . I will come and break up your Leads. . . . I want no more of your schemes. . . . It is I who will dictate. . . . This government is old . . . it must fall!" On April 30, at Trieste, he shuts his door in the face of the last ambassadors of Venice; "Gentlemen, I cannot receive you; you and your Senate are dripping with French blood." On May 1, from Palma Nova, he declares war.

Joubert has orders to make his way to Bassano, Baraguey d'Hilliers to Mestre, Victor to stay at Padua. Masséna seizes Goritz, Quieu Klagenfurth, Serrurier Sacile, Bernadotte Laibach, Delmas Spilimberg. The two cavalry-divisions are cantoned one under Dugua at Udine, the other under Dumas at Treviso. Henceforward all communication between Venice and the mainland is cut off.

On the preceding evening, when men thought they



could already hear the guns from the Zattere, a conference of emergency has been called in the apartments of the Doge Manin—one of those conferences which are a substitute for the Senate. They are in consultation. The Proveditor Dolfin proposes going to look for *Monsi* Haller, the French minister of finance, whom he knows slightly. The Procurator Pesaro, in tears, talks of running away, of every country being home to a brave man, of there being plenty of occupation in Switzerland; and then, after taking a pinch of snuff, he seems to grow calmer. The cannon thunder. A courier arrives from Condulmer with the news that the French have begun operations at Fusine. This way and that the white-haired Doge paces the room; and he is heard to mutter between his teeth, "To-night we are not even safe in our beds."

Hitherto the Republic has done nothing but submit and suffer. Faced with the Revolution, she has maintained her usual attitude at first of unarmed, then of armed neutrality. She has received the ambassador of the new government, as she received Louis XVIII. when he emigrated to Verona as the Comte de Lille. She has taken care to displease nobody, to keep on good terms with both sides, to take no irrevocable resolution, to avoid compromising herself, to leave the door open, to wait and to procrastinate. Yielding to the pressure of events, she has dismissed Louis XVIII., who as he went asked that the Bourbon name should be erased from the Golden Book. Bending to necessity, she has allowed Imperial troops, and then French troops, to pass her border. From day to day and hour to hour, she has accepted insults, pocketed affronts, and submitted to outrage. She has swallowed down her shame. She has laid open her roads, paid the bills, and spent millions in provisioning these packs of ragamuffins let loose on her trail. She has prosecuted those who have fired on them. She has dismantled her forts, shown unwearying patience



and compliance, consented to everything, understood and endured everything, supplied every requisition, made every apology, growing more polite and more cringing each time. Will she at the last instant, in presence of the roar of guns, come to herself again? Will danger avail to stir her, where outrage has been in vain? Now that all compromise has been to no purpose, now that she has vainly trodden the road of painful humiliation to its end, will she at last come to action worthy of her dignity, to atone if it cannot preserve? Will she rise to that courage of despair which makes the victim draw himself up beneath the knife—the instinctive heroism of a creature at bay which charges the sharp-fanged pursuers, and dies, it is true, but dies fighting? Fallen though she be, she has still a fleet left; twenty-five ships of the line, fifteen frigates; brigs, cutters, bomb-ships, galleys, *sciambecchi*; in all eighty-four armed units, not a few of them carrying as many as seventy guns; she has still troops, the Arsenalotti, the Bocchesi, the Schiavoni, who fill the squares, and transform Venice into a camp, keeping silent watch with lighted matches around the black-mouthed cannon. But alas! Condulmer refuses to defend the capital. Zusto, the Provveditor of the lagoons, sends in his resignation. Pesaro has carried out his plan and fled into Austria. Venice bows her head and awaits the stroke.

She submits and agrees to everything, throws open her Leads, her Wells, her dungeons, in which only seven poor prisoners are found confined. She abolishes with a stroke of the pen the Supreme Tribunal which for more than three centuries has spread abroad the dread majesty of its name. She arrests the Three, whose only crime is to have carried out the laws of their country, and throws them into prison. Is this all? Something more is desired, maybe? What is it? only let them know. Money? Of their own accord they carry 6000 sequins in golden rods to *Monsù* Haller. Or the disbanding of

the loyal Schiavoni ? Of their own accord they ship the troops, anticipating their pay for the whole of June ; and even complain that Morosini, whose task it is to send them back to the mainland, is too slow in doing it. Are the venerable and original laws to be offered up as a holocaust to the Hydra ? They are voluntarily offered ; everything is sacrificed—the nobility, the pride, the history, the past of Venice. For by this time more is required than to forestall the wishes of the barbarian invader ; his help must be called in against the Schiavoni, whose too precise loyalty is giving rise to anxiety ; against the Arsenalotti, who might oppose the already agreed-to abdication of the Council ; against the people even, whose foolhardy courage would fain measure swords with the conqueror of the Austrians and of Italy. The French are called in. And truly, after the sitting of April 30, in which the Conference of emergency determined on the sacrifice of the State, and the sitting of May 1, in which the Grand Council ratified the decision, it was time to call them in.

On the 12th of May, when the Grand Council has met for the last time, and, scared by a few gunshots from the Piazza, has just abdicated its authority in wild disorder, a cry is heard from the street, which once echoed in battle, which covered the sea with noise and sounded amid the roar of guns : “ San Marco ! ” It is uttered by the Schiavoni, and the gondoliers, and the populace, and the rabble, who hoist the old Lion-ensign to the yard-arm, and armed with knives and cudgels charge the wearers of the cockade, attack the shops of Jacobins, and threaten the mansions of revolutionaries ; so that on the Rialto the guns have to be turned on these madmen.

Vain explosion !—the last convulsion of agony ; the shudder which yet moves the corpse from which the head has been struck off ; growing quiet, and then ceasing altogether. All is silent. Venice is dead, and by her own hand. She has broken up, unresisting and inglorious,

as if she had no more glory remaining ; as if she had spent all her stock of glory in living, and had none left to die.

The French have entered the invincible city which triumphed over Europe and over the sea, which lasted through fourteen centuries of independence, and in all these years never saw her watery ramparts once transgressed.

On the night of May 14, 1797, the 5th and 63rd regiments of the line have embarked by squads in the forty launches sent for them to Mestre. At sunrise, 3231 men, commanded by General Baraguey d'Hilliers, seize the islands, the castles, and the squares. Whichever way the eye turns, they are to be seen ; at S. Secondo, at S. Giorgio d'Alega, at La Certosa ; they are at S. Niccolò on the Lido, at S. Andrea, at S. Pietro, at the Alberoni fort ; on the Rialto and at the Arsenal ; and on the Piazza, behind their piled arms, four hundred of them are showing " clamorous and lively delight."

Lean forms, shaped for vigorous action, grimy with powder, their hats decked only with the cockades ; such are the conquerors Venice sees in her midst. These are the men who have done their marching without shoes, have camped for the night without brandy, bitten a cartridge by way of bread, and charged in a hurricane and a thunderstorm. At Lodi, they advanced at the double beneath a shower of grapeshot. On the plateau of Rivoli, they fought in the snow. On the Col de Tarvis, they fought high above the clouds. Meeting Wurmser, they stood up against three armies. With no breathing-space, with no truce, no quarter, no pity for others or for themselves, with famine muttering within them and cannon in the distance, for eighteen months they have done nothing else but march and fight, charge and slash and take aim and fire ; and march on, ever on, forward ! They have lived in the midst of alarums, and scattered terror far and wide. They have wearied death, they

have conquered victory. They seem to rise by head and shoulders above the future, whose masters they are ; to be forged of a different temper, to issue from another age. They are a distinct race and a different soul ; a new time and a new era. . . . Ah ! the old and charming existences of a happier past ! The courtly and graceful ways, the light spirits, the careless beauty, forgetting everything in life that is gloomy and hideous ! Fire-works the sole use for powder, pleasure the unique end of life ! It is all over now. A world is dead, never to be born more. The violins are still, the vision has faded, the bark of illusions has passed away. Farewell, dear masks ! Bayonets are crossed on the Piazza of S. Mark.

"One cannot laugh for ever. . . ." So runs the startling heading of the last chapter of Gozzi's *Memoirs*. That was what the old riotous Republic would not believe. She did not know that every fault must be expiated, that death is the great and tragic reality in this world below ; that happiness unbought by tears must some day be paid for in tears. Alas ! what outrage is needed to reveal to her the omnipotence of the law she has slighted ! The whole end is deplorable. It was in vain that the heroes of pleasure deceived themselves so completely that they almost deceive us too. The greater number of them live to see the bankruptcy of their happiness. La Rosalba, Goldoni, Caterina Tron, the Gozzi, Casanova, Gratarol, Antonio Longo, all die in distress. And above all these individual failures, and more dramatic than any of them, is the ruin and fall of the country which cannot even conceive the shame of its fall, but sings hymns in honour of the conqueror who buffets it, plants a tree of liberty with a laugh over the corpse of its independence, and dances the *farandole* and shouts for joy around the spot.

It will need the supreme outrage of the Treaty of Campo Formio, and after the French the Imperial troops, and then nearly fifty years of the Austrian eagle clutching

the entrails of the Lion, before the recovery can come—the heroism of the siege, when beneath a storm of shells the gondoliers sang as they transported their loads of powder!

No, Venice was not wiped out of the map of nations. Daniele Manin avenged her for Lodovico ; and her revolution of '48 makes amends at the bar of history for her abdication of '97.





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<sup>1</sup> All these books have been actually examined by the author, with the exception of those indicated by an asterisk—these latter he has not been able to consult at first hand.

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